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The SIDE Story of the WILSONS in the WHITE HOUSE

A Story of Love and High Adventure by

JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

A life of ease and luxury is not the life for healthy gums!

Under this modern regime of soft food, our gums grow weak and lose their tone. They need exercise, they need stimulation, they need IPANA TOOTH PASTE







JUST glance at the menu! From soup to soufflé modern food is soft, creamy, over-refined—entirely lacking in the roughage and fibre that once kept gums and teeth as they were meant to be—firm, healthy and sound.

"Stagnation is death—circulation, life and health."
—well-known maxim.

* * *

YOU could hardly find a better case in point for the maxim above than the difficulties so many people are having with their gums today.

For gums are seldom in perfect health. Pyorrhea, thank goodness, is quite often more of a fear than a reality—but there can be no doubt whatever that troubles of the gums are both prevalent and stubborn.

Our diet undermines the health of our gums

Lack of stimulation from the food we eat—lack of "exercise," the dentists will tell you—is the source of many of these modern gum disorders. Think for a moment how we refine, how we "denature" our food, before we eat it.

We peel our fruits, and stew them till they almost fall apart. We husk our grains, and mill all the roughage out of them. We cook our vegetables to a soft consistency and cover them with creamy sauces. We delight in tender, flaky desserts, pies and pastries. So, made up to a great extent of delectable dainties, our diet is too soft, too easy on our teeth and gums. It denies them work—with the attendant stimulation and massage that a coarser fare would give.

That is why gums soften, weaken and lose their tone. The blood within their walls does not circulate freely, new fresh blood does not refresh the depleted tissues as it should. "Pink tooth brush," the earliest sign of impairment of the health of gums, is a complaint of neglect and often a warning of troubles to come.

Common sense alone would dictate that the way to correct such troubles is to supply to the tissues the stimulation of which they are abnormally deprived. And your dentist, if you ask him, will confirm this reasoning.

How Ipana and massage defeat "Pink Tooth Brush"

Your dentist will explain the simple technique of this gentle frictionizing of the gums, done with the brush or with the fingers. He will tell you that the daily practice of gum stimulation is a splendid health habit to form. And very likely he will suggest that you perform both the gum massage and the regular brushing of your teeth with Ipana Tooth Paste.

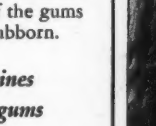
For the ziratol content of Ipana gives it a peculiar efficacy in the toning and stimulation of undernourished gums. Known and used for years by dentists, ziratol is a hemostatic and antiseptic of high value, and its presence in Ipana is one great reason for the strong professional backing that originally gave Ipana its start.

Switch to Ipana for at least one month

The coupon, of course, will bring you the ten-day tube, and that is enough to acquaint you with Ipana's delicious taste and its power to keep your teeth clean, white and brilliant.

But the better plan is to buy a full-size tube at the next drug store you pass. That is enough for more than one hundred brushings—a much fairer test of all Ipana can do to keep your teeth and gums in the sound and sturdy health nature intended.

BRUSH your teeth and gums with Ipana twice a day—you can give your dentist no better aid in keeping them sound and healthy.



BRISTOL-MYERS CO.
Dept. H 17, 73 West Street,
New York, N. Y.

Kindly send me a trial tube of IPANA TOOTH PASTE. Enclosed is a two-cent stamp to cover partly the cost of packing and mailing.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

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IPANA Tooth Paste

— made by the makers of Sal Hepatica



Hearst's INTERNATIONAL JANUARY 1927
Combined with
COSMOPOLITAN

I Want What I Want When I Want It

By *Albert Payson Terhune*

I WAS in Rome. I was dead broke. I was twenty-one. This was in 1894.

The Corso was, and is, the Paradise for foreign shoppers. Up and down its gleaming length are show-windows containing a million attractively worth-while things.

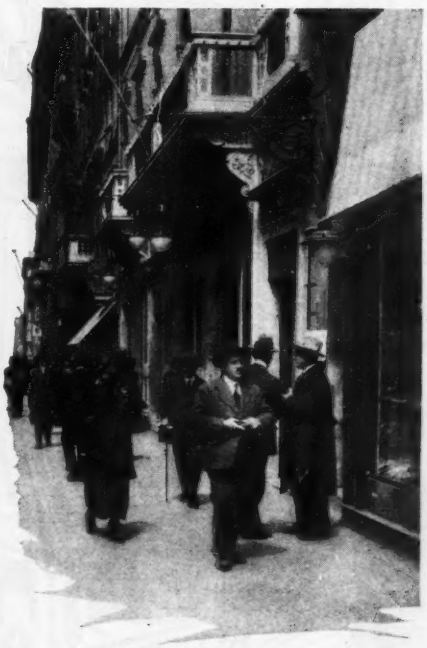
From end to end of the long street I used to wander, a lanky young giant, jingling coppers in my pocket. I was not starving. But I had no cash to spend.

I can see those magical windows to this day, glamoured by decades of yearning memory. To me they seemed to contain everything on earth whereon a man of means might crave to spend his wealth.

In one jeweler's window, among a throng of other beautiful things, was a silver and enamel cigaret case, depicting in softly rich hues the story of Leda and the Swan. In front of that window, more than before all the rest combined, I used to stand hungrily. One day I gained courage to go into the shop and price the cigaret case. The sum was 425 lire—then about $84 in American money. It might as well have been $84,000, so far as I was concerned. The egregious price and the shopman's careless way of naming it—these awoke in me an impotent rage, whose embers smoldered for thirty years thereafter.

I made a fierce babyish vow that one day I should return to Rome and buy out the Corso. My first triumphant purchase was to be the $84 Leda-and-the-Swan cigaret case. I made similar vows, if less vehemently, that same year on my daily walks through the rue de la Paix, in Paris, and in certain London streets.

For many a long year, in odd moments, I nursed that resolution of mine.



Photograph by Burton Holmes, Ewing Galloway

¶ *The Corso, Paradise of shoppers, where I used to wander up and down, dead broke.*

Then, last winter, on my way home from Africa, I loafed northward through Italy and France. It was my first adult visit to either country, where so much of my youth had been spent.

Back to memory came my olden vow, as I neared Rome. On my first day there I went post-haste to the Corso, grimly resolved to buy scores of its wondrous wares. I say "grimly" resolved because that is what I mean. To my own amaze, I found I was not triumphantly or even gaily resolved.

My first goal was that jewelry shop, where had shone the beautiful cigaret case. It was not on view there. I went into the shop and asked where I could buy such a case.

The clerk vanished into the back rooms. Presently he emerged. In his hand he bore such a case as I had asked for.

Did I buy it and carry it forth, rapturously happy over a fulfilled dream? I did not.

I turned the garish thing over and over, inspecting it. And the longer I looked at it the less I wanted it. Presently I laid it down and went away.

Nor did the rue de la Paix stir me to any more covetous yearnings. It was the same on Bond Street, in London.

With no cash, I had had divine longings for everything in sight. With plenty of money in my pockets, I could not scourge into wakefulness a single genuine longing.

I came home sorely puzzled, and I told my experiences to a wise man, expecting him to be surprised. He was not.

As I finished, he said:

"So it has taken you thirty years to learn how infinitely better it is to want something and not be able to get it, than to be able to get it and not want it."

When I was little I had a dreary fit of indigestion. Feverishly I craved ice-cream.

My nurse promised me I should have a heaping plate of it in ten minutes if first I would take a nice teaspoonful of medicine. Thus bribed, I gagged down the black and sticky dose.

It was ipecac.

Imagine whether or not I wanted ice-cream, or any other form of food, ten minutes after that!

AWHILE ago there was a vaudeville song whose title and theme was "I Want What I Want When I Want It." It was supposed to be a comic ditty. Always it was good for a laugh. It passed into a current catchword.

Like much other stark wisdom, it passed for a joke. It was as full of eternal truth as the axiom about the shortest distance between two points.

"*Vanitas vanitatum!* Which of us has his desires; or, having them, is satisfied?"

To the best of my memory I was not consulted as to the make-up of the world. If I had been, I should have arranged that Money and Youth should go ever hand in hand; that cash and the mighty urge to spend it should be contemporary. I should have arranged that the lean years, financially, should begin—not end, so often—in middle age.

Think what it would be to look back, from present need for economy, and recall the myriad wonderful things bought with our abundance of money in the days when its frivolous spending was a delight! To have been able to cash in on every vagrant wish!

Yes, I suppose one would have a plentiful cud of remorse whereon to chew with middle age's defective teeth. But if one must chew on some sort of cud—and one must!—how infinitely more joyous to chew the cud of smug Remorse than that of ashy Regret!

By CHARLES



Expert Advice on

DANA GIBSON

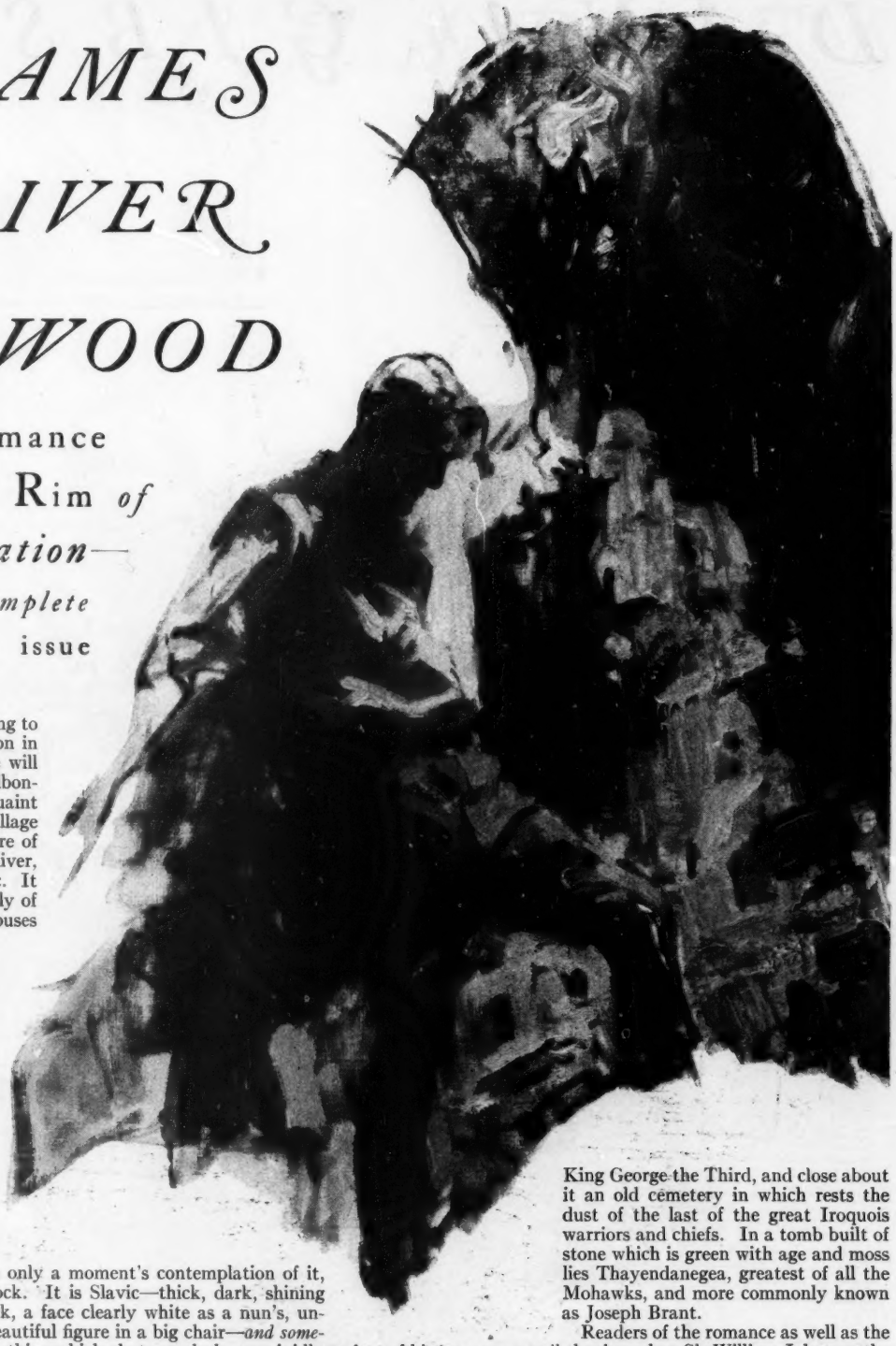


Their *First* Quarrel

By James Oliver Curwood

A Romance from the Rim of Civilization—

Told *Complete* in this issue



THIS story is going to start like a lesson in geography. We will begin with Peribonka. Peribonka is a quaint little French-Canadian village which nestles on the shore of the glorious Peribonka River, in the Province of Quebec. It is made up almost entirely of a row of thirty or forty houses which face the river.

Until quite recently the two happiest people in the village of Peribonka were Maria Chapdelaine and her husband, Samuel, of whom Louis Hemon wrote.

Now there is another. They call her the Crippled Lady. She is often seen sitting on the wide veranda of a quaint little home in a garden of flowers. She is a vision of loveliness which one cannot easily forget.

Her beauty, if one has only a moment's contemplation of it, strikes almost with a shock. It is Slavic—thick, dark, shining hair drawn smoothly back, a face clearly white as a nun's, unforgetable eyes, a slim, beautiful figure in a big chair—*and something else*. It is that other thing which photographs her so vividly and so permanently upon one's consciousness. Perhaps it is some time before one realizes that what he has seen is not beauty alone, but *happiness*. The Crippled Lady, who cannot walk, who cannot stand alone, is happy, and she covets nothing which God has not already given her. Her voice tells you that.

The people of Peribonka love this charming foreigner who has made her home among them. They all know her story. And that story is an epic which will live for a long time in the country about Lac St. Jean. It is this story I have set out to tell—who the Crippled Lady is and why she is there, how she bravely tried to give up her life for another woman's husband, and why she lives today so happily in Peribonka.

A traveler to the city of Brantford, Ontario, will find within a few miles of the town a little church built for the Indians by King George the Third, and close about it an old cemetery in which rests the dust of the last of the great Iroquois warriors and chiefs. In a tomb built of stone which is green with age and moss lies Thayendanegea, greatest of all the Mohawks, and more commonly known as Joseph Brant.

Readers of the romance as well as the fact of history may recall the day when Sir William Johnson, the King's right arm in the colonies, first saw Thayendanegea's sister. He was attending a muster of his county militia when an officer came galloping by with a beautiful Indian girl of sixteen riding laughingly behind him. Sir William, whose wife had recently died, caught a vision of lovely dark eyes and of flowing black hair streaming in a cloud behind a form of rare symmetry and grace, and in that moment the heart of the lonely and susceptible widower was smitten so deeply that evening found Molly Brant in Johnson Castle, where she remained thenceforth its mistress and the idol of its proprietor.

When James Kirke married Molly Craddock, more than a century and a quarter later, neither thought very much about the strain of Indian blood in Molly's veins, inherited from the other Molly who had come with tresses flying before Sir William Johnson. Kirke was not the kind of man to boast of ancestors or

The Crippled Lady of Peribonka



"*I'm glad you understand,*" *Carla said, as if Paul had spoken. "I might run away, hide somewhere, and always remember, and always love you. But I must go to Claire. It will be hard to do that.*"

Illustrations by Pruett Carter

even to think about them, for he had one consuming ambition and that was to pyramid his inherited millions into ever increasing financial power. He became so completely interested in this task that after a few years Molly was left very largely to dreams and to an absorbing love for her young son, Paul.

From the hour Paul opened his eyes to the light of life he had in him the soul of an Indian. After a hundred and thirty-five years the blood of the lovely Molly Brant had come into its own. The modern Molly, who lived in a palace with a Crœsus for a husband, saw what was happening as the years passed by. Her boy grew lean of face and figure. His cheek-bones were a little high. His love for the outdoors became a passion. "White Savages" history had called the earliest descendants of Molly Brant and Sir William Johnson, and Paul Kirke had in him the restless, poetic soul and wilderness yearnings of these first children of the two who so dramatically carved themselves a place in the annals of their time.

In his thirteenth year Paul's mother died. No one would ever know the terrible, unhealing wound it cut in his heart.

That his father married again soon after, and had another son, did not hurt Paul except that it made him grieve more deeply for his mother and added to his loneliness. He got along only fairly well in college because he could never completely shackle his mind to duties that were confined within stone and brick walls. It took him an extra year to finish an engineering course and after that he was never happy except when in the open spaces. In a business way he was interested only in his father's timber-lands and such water-power projects as were situated in the wilderness. As a whole he was a disappointment to his parent.

In his thirty-second year Paul married Claire Durand, daughter of his father's partner.

In his thirty-eighth year he was officially in charge of the huge engineering work on the Mistassini River in the wilderness north of Lac St. Jean, and had been three years on the job.

During these three years he had known Carla Haldan.

He was thinking of Carla as he looked from a window of his bungalow office on the Hill down over the vast and naked workings of an engineering achievement which was costing fifty million dollars. He felt no exultation or thrill of pride and in his eyes was a far-back, somber gloom. What he saw was to him an unending and nauseous pit, into which a steady and monotonous drizzle of rain was falling. Everywhere were smoke and steel and distant roar and miles of sticky, slimy clay. There were fifteen hundred men on the job below him working in three eight-hour shifts and neither darkness nor storm could stop them.

All about them locomotives were running up and down with their lines of cars, clam-shells as big as houses were smashing their hungry mouths into the obstinate clay, engines and tackle were grinding and roaring, derricks were creaking under weights of steel, stone-crushers were breaking up train-loads of rock, cement-mixers were spewing out streams of engineering lava—everywhere a rumble and din, everywhere the ugliness and madness of a man-made place of torment.

Paul was thinking this even with Carla Haldan in his mind. He could see the gray-white sluices and dikes with their cement and steel walls and the monster sections of the almost completed dam which was to harness northern waters to the production of light and power for twenty million people.

Three years of human effort and millions in capital lay under his eyes. Yet about it all was only one excusable and beautiful thing for him. That was the rim of wilderness, the green and black and purple boundaries of the forest which clung like a frame about the workings.

His contemplation of the scene in the valley was interrupted by a voice at his office door and he turned to greet the most intimate of his friends in the field, Colin Derwent, who was the company's medical man. Even on rainy days and with his boots clogged with mud Derwent was a cheerful soul. With his little mustache, his smooth cheeks, his liveliness of movement and his appreciation of all phases of life he continued to bear the appearance of a boy, though he had filled an important chair in medicine in Johns Hopkins.

HE NODDED to Paul, dropped off his rubber coat and began to fill his pipe as he looked out over the workings.

"Rotten day, isn't it?"

"Rotten," agreed Paul.

"But for a man who's done *that*—it ought to be sunshine all the time," added Derwent. "Splendid work, Paul. Something to be proud of all your life. Something——"

"I hate it," interrupted Paul. "I've hated it from the beginning. I've hated it for three years."

Derwent nodded. "I know it."

Paul turned from the window with a fiercely eloquent gesture. His features were so steadily immobile they might have been molded out of the steel down in the pit. His eyes were a deeper blue than when his mother had known him and they held a chained something which was forever struggling against the powerful will of the man. Occasionally the prisoner was released, and when this happened there was a singular, far-seeing, almost poetic beauty in them.

Derwent's analytical mind had arrived at the truth of the matter a long time ago. He nodded again, and repeated, "I know you don't like it. But it's a great work just the same."

Paul smiled grimly and Derwent surrounded himself with a cloud of smoke.

"Do you think I am quite a fool, Colin? Do you really believe I could be on a job of this kind for three years without getting a pretty accurate measurement of myself? The fraud of it all makes me sick! The flattery of my friends—everybody treating me as if I were an omniscient powerful godhead of some kind! I tell you it is all a lie, and I hate it. I'm glad I didn't build that outrage down there. If there is a Power that mounts the storm and walks upon the wind It ought to strike us dead for transforming a paradise into *that!*"

He walked to the window and pointed down. Never had Derwent or any other man seen such strange passion in Paul's face. Weeks and months and years of gnawing torment had at last broken through the dam he had built up about his emotions.

"Fifteen million dollars in and about that hole before it is finished, Derwent," he said. "My father's money. That is why I am here. A score of engineers are on this job and every one of them is better fitted to fill my place than I. Yet they are slaves to my whims and desires as long as they remain on this work. I am the strutting figurehead of a financial monarchy that is a juggernaut in its pitilessness.

"I hate that pit down there. I hate the millions going into it. They follow me, haunt me, tie me hand and foot, grimace at me and mock me. They leave me nothing to fight for, unless it is to destroy them. Sometimes I have had that terrible thought. I would like to feel the joy of knowing that I had to work or go hungry. What a thrill that must give one!"

He turned toward Derwent again with a smile.

"Pardon me. It's a gloomy day and I feel like raving. But I did love that glorious river before we cut it into ribbons. If my father would head his millions the other way and save such things instead of destroying them I'd be quite happy. As it is, I suppose I must carry on until the thing's finished."

"You owe yourself an apology," Derwent remonstrated, pocketing his pipe. "The engineers and your father's money are making the job a success, of course. But do you ever think of morale? That is a big thing, a mighty big thing. And it is what you have kept alive in the camps up and down the river for the last three years. You're too serious, you don't laugh enough, you don't join much in our parties and excitements, *but people like you.* That is what pulls the trick. Even the old heads, the engineers who worked in Egypt and Panama, love to be with you. There isn't a jealous man in the workings. To have made that condition possible is an achievement which makes you the most valuable human asset in the organization."

"It is good of you to say that," acknowledged Paul. "Funny why I should feel so strangely out of humor today. I think Carla's mother is getting on my nerves. Have you seen her recently?"

"This morning."

"And you still insist there is no hope?"

"Positively. I had Doctor Thiedmere come up from Quebec, as you requested. He gives her even less time than I. Doctor Rollins agrees with him. It can't be more than three or four months, I think. Mrs. Haldan knows she is going to die and talks to us very calmly about it. She isn't afraid. If it were not for Carla the thing wouldn't be such a tragedy."

"I know. It's Carla," said Paul. "Sudden sickness and death, like my own mother's, isn't so terrible. But seeing it coming, waiting for it, counting the days and weeks—must be horrible. Carla is losing everything she has when her mother goes. I'm wondering what she will do."

"Go on working among the children. She told my wife that yesterday. When the company's school closes here she will find another. I cannot understand her—quite. She is lovelier than Hebe, and so lovable that half the men I know worship her. Yet she favors one no more than another. She is twenty-five, Lucy-Belle says. They like each other and have had their confidences. Lucy-Belle is a clever little witch at getting to the bottom of things, and she says there is a love-affair in Carla's life, a broken one, which makes it impossible for Carla to love any other man, or marry. Carla told her that."

Paul looked out of the window again, with his back to Derwent.

"What a rotter I am to blow up as I did a few minutes ago," he exclaimed. "But I was thinking of Carla, and the damnable obstinacy of life. Mine has been one way, Carla's another. I was born rich, she came over an immigrant baby. I did nothing but grow up, she fought with the pertinacity of her race for an education after her father died, got it, and has been fighting for her own and her mother's existence ever since. I'm a man. She's a woman. I stand here and sympathize with myself while she bears up like a soldier under her burdens.

"I saw her this morning. It was wet, soggy, gloomy, but she smiled. I would give all this down here—if it were mine to give—could I save her mother for her!"

Derwent put on his rain-coat.

"We all feel that way about it. And—we're helpless. Lucy-Belle wants you to come over to supper. Will you?"

"Thanks. Tell Lucy-Belle she is an angel to think of me so often. I'll come."

PAUL sat at his desk after Derwent had gone. From his chair he could look through another window to a clean and unbroken sweep of country where the forest had stood, and where now were rows of cottages built for the men whose wives and families had come with them to the workings. He could see Lucy-Belle Derwent's home and not far from it the cottage in which Carla Haldan and her mother lived.

He had often felt an emptiness of heart and a great longing when his eyes rested upon these half-hundred homes of the women whose love and loyalty had urged them to follow their husbands' fortunes. His wife was not among them. Only twice in three years had she come up to what she had called "these horrible woods," and then she had departed after a day or two. She was in Europe now. Last year it was Egypt. Next year it would be some other far-away place. Her picture was on his desk. He knew she was beautiful, in a vivid, golden way. But her beauty had never touched him deeply.

Behind Paul's dispassionate features was another being of poetry, of dreams, of hoped-for things—all crushed back and held behind the steely obligations of his life. He had been true to the woman on his desk, just as he knew she was true to him, and whatever he had wanted in woman he tried to build up about her. He wanted to love her. He did love the ideal he created of her. He did not realize that during recent months he had clothed this ideal a little at a time in what he found in Carla Haldan.

Yesterday he had received a letter from Paris. It was friendly and full of interest, but without a line in it to say she wanted him or was looking forward to the time when she would see him again. She must have written it in her dressing-room, with her hair down, for one of the long, fine-spun golden filaments had got into the letter somehow, and at first he wanted to believe



¶ *"Do you love Carla Haldan?" asked Claire. "Yes, I love her." Paul was conscious of having struck a deadly blow, a hurt he would rather have died than inflict upon Claire.*

she had put it there. Then he recalled that previous to this letter it had been five weeks since she had communicated with him. So there was no sentiment about it. Just accident.

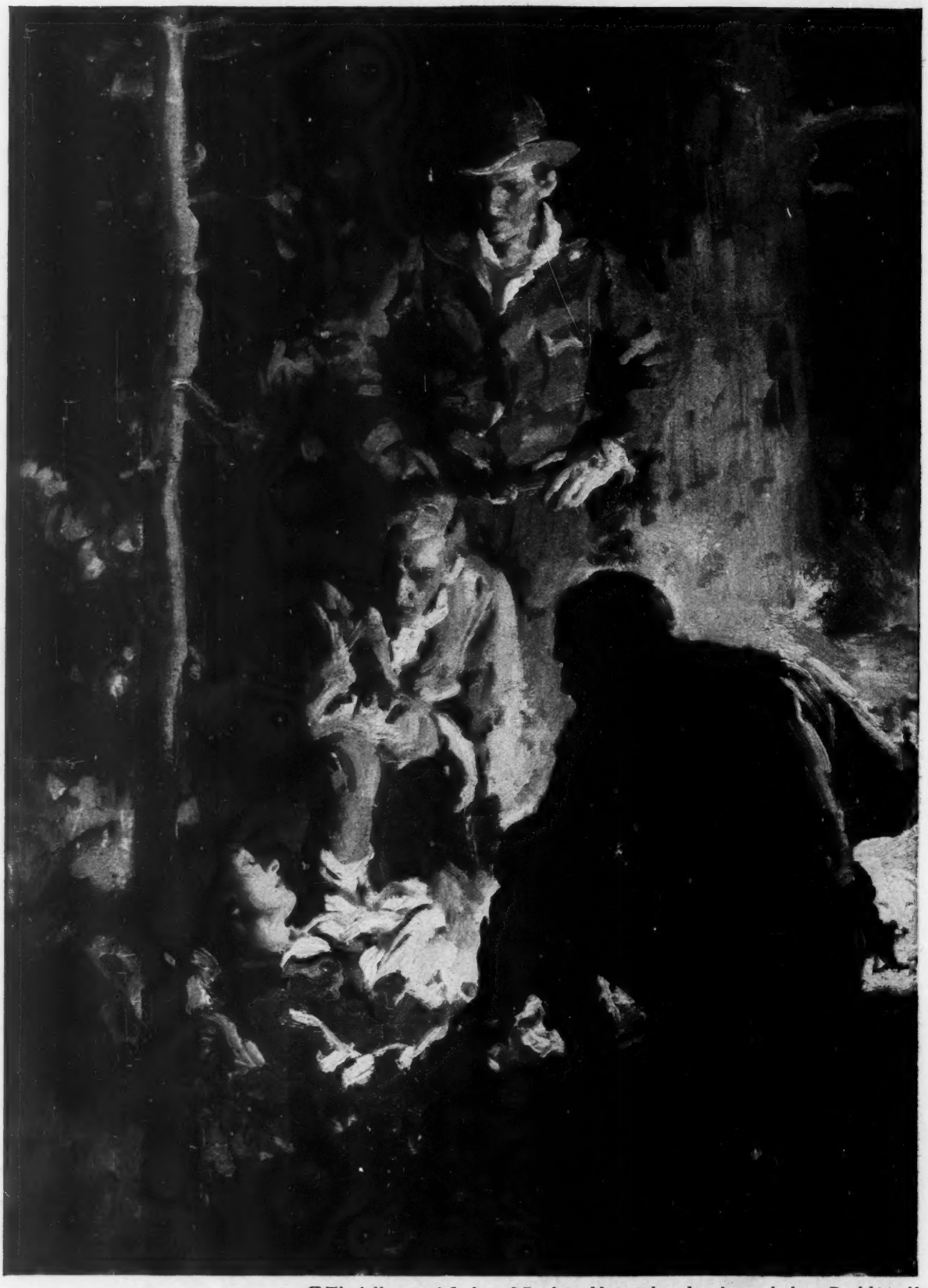
With Carla it was different. Flowers which she cut from her garden were always on his desk. A vase of gorgeous autumn nasturtiums was there now. She made no display of the act, nor was there a motive in it except the one inspired by kindness. Paul knew she would have done the same thing if his wife had been there.

The two had met. Claire, who was an artist, had gone into a little ecstasy of delight over Carla's quiet and unforgetable type of beauty. After their visit in Paul's office, made interesting because Claire had been in the country where the other was born, Carla had seemed to bear in her heart a warm and tender feeling for the woman to whose husband she brought flowers.

Paul was looking at the Haldan cottage as he sat thinking, and saw Carla come out into the rain and turn down the cinder path toward his office. In a little while he knew she was on her way to visit him. He stood up to watch the slim figure in its close-fitting rain coat and hood.

There was something about Carla which was always goddess-like, even in drizzle and mud. Yet she was not really tall as he measured women. Her slimness gave her the appearance of greater height than she possessed.

These things Paul had begun to notice. He could not tell the color of Lucy-Belle's eyes but he knew that Carla's were a clear and beautiful gray, and that the dark lashes which covered them were very long and fine. He observed only casually Lucy-Belle's hair, but Carla's he knew was always closely coiled and drawn back so softly and silkily smooth from her forehead that more than once he had felt the desire to put his hand upon it. He met her at the door; Carla had fresh nasturtiums in her hand.

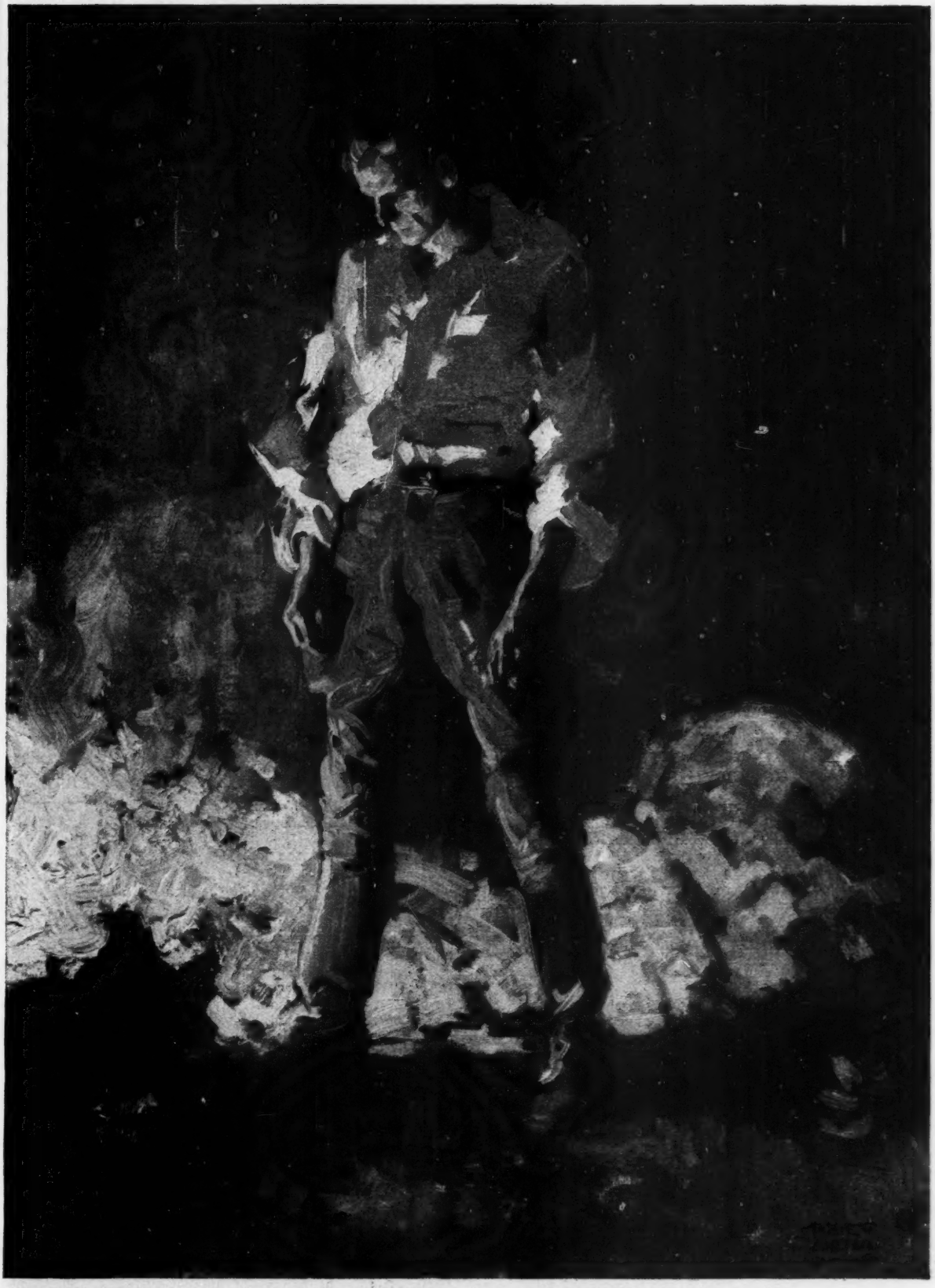


¶ *The full story of Carla and Paul would never have been known had not Paul himself*

"I want to talk with you for only a few moments," she said.

"And I want to talk with you—for a long time," he replied. "The day has been empty and blue, and it brightened only when I saw you. I have been thinking about you—quite a bit."

He had never said as much as this, with the steely shutters let down from his eyes so that the other man within him was looking through. A flush so faint that Paul did not notice it gathered in Carla's cheeks.



told it. He came into the camp in the middle of the night, carrying a woman—a dead woman, they thought.

"Thinking of me?" she inquired. "That is kind of you. I like to be thought about—pleasantly. And you could not think otherwise of me when I bring you flowers!"

He was glad she had spoken about her flowers.

"They have been an encouragement and an inspiration to me," he said. "No matter how annoying my work or how gloomy the day, they are always like a cheering friend smiling at me from my desk."

The warmth in her cheeks deepened into a delicate rose-flush of color.

"I am glad they have seemed friendly to you. They are always that to me. I love them, just as I love trees." Her gaze rested upon the picture of his wife. "I often think of Mrs. Kirke when I gather my nasturtiums," she added. "She is of their beauty, colorful, vivid, full of gold and life. Is she well?"

"I believe so. She is in Paris. I received a letter from her yesterday in which she speaks of you. She says she has not forgotten her threat to come up and paint you some day. That will be exciting, her third visit in three years."

She caught the inflection of irony in his voice, though he was not trying to reveal it. The knowledge of his loneliness sometimes oppressed her. It was one reason why she picked flowers for him. And she was always saying something nice for the woman whose life was so apart from his.

"I have tried to grow hyacinths about my cottage," she said. "But they won't live. I told Mrs. Kirke of my experience when she was here a year ago, and you should have seen her eyes light up. 'I am like that,' she said. 'I would die if I had to live up here. Paul doesn't understand. You won't. Yet—I would die'—and I believe that, too. It isn't her fault any more than it is the hyacinths'. I think your wife is wonderful—giving you up as she is doing, all because of your work."



BEHIND her courage was a smoldering depth of pain. Paul marveled that she could talk to him like this, trying to soothe a little the wound in his life when the heart in her own breast was near breaking with its grief.

"Yes, she is a wonderful woman," he said, thinking only vaguely of his wife. "All women are wonderful. And especially—mothers."

He knew she had come to talk to him about her mother. She bowed her head a little, then her eyes came back to him with a misty glow.

"I don't like to add to your worries," she said. "But it seems necessary. I have come to ask if you will take me over to Peribonka tomorrow and help me arrange for a little plot of ground. My mother loves Peribonka. Now that she is going to die she wants to be buried there. I want to arrange for a place in the cemetery, as near the river as possible. Will you go with me?"

Looking into her bravely clear and tearless eyes, Paul felt himself for a moment unable to answer her. Then he said, "Yes, I will go. But it will be a long time before anything happens. It may be it won't happen at all. Doctors are not infallible. Sometimes——"

A look of gratitude transfigured Carla's face. "Thank you," she said. "It gives me courage to know that *you* are hoping for me like that."

"I am going to write for Miss Wixom to come and take charge of the children," said Paul. "You must be with your mother without interruption."

"Please don't. I must have the work—the pleasure—the inspiration of the children. Mother wants it that way, too. It is from children that all of us get our greatest strength and encouragement. Mother and I need them."

As she rose from her chair she took the picture of Paul's wife from the desk and stood looking at it with her back turned to the light coming through the window. Thus Paul could see them both—the profile of Carla, her exquisitely cut features, the grace and beauty of her head, and his wife smiling up at her out of the picture. After a moment Carla smiled gently in return.

"When is she coming home?" she asked.

"I don't know. She hasn't kept me in touch with her plans. Sometime before Christmas, I think."

He wondered why the note of bitterness persisted in coming into his voice when he spoke of his wife. It annoyed him.

"She likes to surprise me," he added, walking around the end of his desk to stand beside Carla. "When the time comes I will get a telegram from her saying she is on board ship, or in New York. 'Home, Paul,' she said last time. 'When are you coming to see me?' I wish she loved children as you love them!"

"All women love children," replied Carla mysteriously.

"No, she doesn't. I've wanted a lot of them. Boys, mostly. Claire could be such a wonderful mother."

"She will be, some day," said Carla. "I saw the painting of it in her face when she was here, and I see it now—shining in her eyes—in this picture. She has a soul as deep as the sea, Mr. Kirke, and she must love children!"

She replaced the picture on the desk, and Paul helped her with her raincoat.

THE next day was Saturday and he started for Peribonka early in the morning with Carla. Bad weather had given way at last to glorious autumnal sunshine and warmth. He was glad the rain-soaked sand and clay made a horse and buggy necessary. Carla was different, had grown different overnight. She seemed nearer to him, infinitely more dependent than yesterday and happier—if there could be such a thing as that emotion left in her life.

When they came to Peribonka, Maria Chapdelaine set them a luncheon in the old-fashioned little dining-room overlooking her garden with its luxuriant array of vegetables and flowers.



Paul felt as though they were leaving something in Peribonka, just as the warmth of Carla's hand had left something in his heart.

Samuel Chapdelaine joined them at the table for a visit, and after a time Paul took him aside and explained his mission. They went up the street together and when they returned the business was over. The small square of ground with its wild honeysuckle vines belonged to Carla.

HE TOOK her to see it after they said good-by to the Chapdelaines, and when they stood over it, looking down at the river, he saw tears in Carla's eyes for the first time since he had known her. He reached out his hand and she gave him her own. He held it for a few moments and neither broke the silence which fell between them as they walked down the foot-worn path and through the picket gate. An impulse which neither attempted to voice held them for a time in Peribonka.

When they were ready to go Paul felt as if he were leaving something there, just as the warmth of Carla's hand had left something in his heart.

He answered his wife's letter that evening, and in his pages to her his freshly roused emotions found their voice.

He told about the tragedy in Carla's life, of their journey to Peribonka, and of the little plot of ground in the cemetery. Writing in his office, with his wife's face looking at him, it was not difficult for him to let the floods pour out, just as he had unleashed them once or twice before in his six years of married life with her. He was a man, wanting a woman. He wanted his wife. He told her this as tenderly as a man could write to a woman. It was a letter of love, of arisen hope, of visionings—to his wife. Carla was the inspiration of it.

He went to his bachelor quarters and tried to read. One by one the houses grew dark. Still he endeavored to make his books and magazines interest him. Never had his nerves been more sleeplessly alert and their obstinacy persisted after he had undressed and gone to bed. An incessant stream of things passed through his mind, detached, illogical, unreasonable, and always bringing him back in one way or another to Carla and her mother. He got up and dressed. It was a vividly starry night without a moon, and for an hour he walked briskly along a forest trail until he came to a place where it forked. One of its branches turned back to the Hill. He followed this road.

After a little he came to the row of cottages. There was a light in the Haldan home. He stopped at the gate in the picket fence which enclosed Carla's flower-gardens, and his ears caught a sound which did not come from the Pit. It was like a cry.

He opened the gate quietly and went in. A window was open somewhere and he could hear clearly a voice that was sobbing. It was Carla! He went to the door and knocked against it gently. Then more loudly. Someone came and the door opened.

He entered and stood beside Carla. Her face and eyes were stricken with a grief that terrified him. Then, in the dim light, she smiled at him through tears.

"I was hoping for you," she said.

She turned and went ahead of him into the big room with Mrs. Haldan's empty chair near the window, and from that to another room that was full of light, and from which the sobbing must have come to him at the gate. In the open door of this room Carla waited, and without turning her head gave him her hand. It was a cold, lifeless little hand. He closed his own over it tightly. They went in. Mrs. Haldan lay in her bed. Her face was lighted with peace, her lips were gently smiling. Paul knew she was dead.

Carla drew him nearer. When they were beside her mother she looked up at him. Her eyes, flooded with their pain, were starry bright, almost with pride, almost with glory.

"Beautiful," she whispered, the word breaking in her throat.

Paul bowed his head. "Yes, she is beautiful," he said, fighting to keep his voice even.

The hand which was not holding Carla's he placed on her mother's forehead. For a few moments they stood in this way. Then the same impulse which had drawn his boyish lips to his mother's cold face when her soul was gone made him bend over and kiss the smooth brow where his hand had lain. A little cry tore itself from Carla's breast, and freeing her hand from Paul's she sank down upon her knees and pressed her face closely against her mother. For an eternity, it seemed to him, he stood over her—an eternity in which he could find no words which might help a little to ease her grief.

Slowly he put out a hand until it rested on Carla's head. Then he gently stroked her hair, and after a little the tenseness went out of her body and she seemed to be sleeping beside her mother—sleeping with wide-open, misty eyes which Paul could not see.

On Tuesday they went again to Peribonka.

For thirty minutes there was silence in the Pit, the first time in three years. The Pit demanded it; (*Continued on page 155*)



A Big *LITTLE* Man

By Irvin S. Cobb



¶ "*Having saved a nation from ruin, he still retains his balance and his sanity, his humanity and his humility.*"

Photograph Keystone View Company

BEFOREHAND I had my own mental picture of this man Mussolini. It was not what you would call an altogether pleasant picture. I conceived of a formidable, almost a forbidding figure, a creature bulky in the shoulders and heavy in the jowl; and under a scowl overhanging like the cornices of a jail a pair of hard, bright, domineering eyes like two live coals in prison; a face forever lurking among the shadows cast by a brooding and a hostile soul.

Nobody ever drew for himself a poorer likeness of somebody else!

Still, I might be excused for my faulty brush-work. I had taken for my model a composite. From dead walls all over Italy wherever I went for weeks past there had glared out at me that sinister mask, half in solid black, half in cruelly bleak sketching which *il duce's* worshipers like to stencil on every spare yard of space. There was no mercy in that semblance. I am prepared now to say there was no justice in it, either—not justice for the original. Then the more popular photographs of Mussolini showed me a suggestion at least of a hulking shape with a belligerent jaw thrust forward, an arm swung aloft as though to deliver a blow, a threat and a defiance in the set of the grim mouth. Finally, there was the record of his life to be reckoned with. Take Mussolini's history in a paragraph:

Born of peasant stock in an obscure village, the son of a blacksmith who himself was a lifelong rebel against organized and legalized inequalities; christened for that Benito Juarez who overthrew the last empire in the soil of North America and made a republic of Mexico; bred a socialist from the cradle; shoved into the turbulent hurly-burly of ruthless, bitterly partisan politics when nothing more than a boy and beguiled into running a hopeless race for a parliamentary seat against a rich man; smashing a ballot-box in a fit of angry temper at what he thought an unfair election and fleeing to Switzerland to avoid punishment by the law, only to be banished later from that haven because the Swiss authorities regarded him as a harborer of dangerous doctrines; traveling half-fed and half-clad as a refugee in France and the Trentino; working as a common day-laborer and as a stone-mason's helper; hungry often and homeless more than once but always greedier for knowledge than for food even, and so studying books on political economy and stories of great revolutionists while his fellow workers drowsed or gossiped; returning from exile to edit a struggling socialist newspaper and by virtue of his own fiery enthusiasm to make of it a conspicuous success; many times arrested and many times locked up in village calabooses; twice paraded with handcuffs on his wrists; flung out of his party in 1914 because his patriotism was stronger than his allegiance to any group not in accord with the real national ideal; cursed as a traitor and a Judas and traduced and slandered and foully libeled and publicly reviled by those who had been his beloved associates and his disciples; changed overnight from a leader and a spokesman, and he only twenty-nine years old then, to a scorned and hated outcast; founding a new paper to argue for war on the side of the Allies; writing burning editorials, barbed manifestoes, thundering broadsides, brutally sarcastic attacks all day and haranguing mass-meetings of indifferent or openly contemptuous (*Continued on page 144*)



Footprints *in the*

Illustrations by
Dean Cornwell

THERE is no place in Malaya that has more charm than Tanah Merah. It lies on the sea and the sandy shore is fringed with casuarinas. The government offices are still in the old red Raadhuis that the Dutch built when they owned the land and on the hill stand the gray ruins of the fort wherewith the Portuguese maintained their hold over the unruly natives.

Tanah Merah was for long the busiest mart of the Middle East and its harbor was crowded with shipping when the clipper and the junk still sailed the China seas. But now it is dead. It has the sad and romantic charm of all places that have once been of importance and live now on the recollection of a vanished grandeur. It is a sleepy little town and strangers that come to it, losing the energy they brought with them, insensibly drop into its easy and lethargic ways. Successive rubber booms bring it no prosperity and the ensuing slumps hasten its decay.

The European quarter is strangely silent. It is trim and neat and clean. The houses of the white men—government servants and agents of companies—stand round an immense *padang*, agreeable little bungalows shaded by great cassias, and the *padang* is vast and green and well cared for, like the lawn of a cathedral close, and indeed there is in the aspect of this corner of Tanah Merah something quiet and delicately secluded that reminds you of the precincts of Canterbury.

The club, a spacious but shabby building, is unfrequented. It has an air of neglect and when you enter you feel that you intrude. But on Wednesdays the phonograph is set going in the large room up-stairs and people come in from the surrounding country to dance. There are sometimes a dozen couples then and it is even possible to make up two tables of bridge.

It was on one of these occasions that I met the Cartwrights. I was staying with a man called Gaze who was head of the police and he came into the billiard-room where I was sitting and asked me if I would make up a four. The Cartwrights were planters and they came in to Tanah Merah on Wednesdays because it gave their girl a chance of dancing a little. They were very nice people, said Gaze, quiet and unobtrusive, and played a very pleasant game of bridge.

I followed Gaze into the card-room and was introduced to the Cartwrights. They were already seated at a table and Mrs. Cartwright was shuffling the cards. It inspired me with confidence to see the competent way in which she did it. She took half the pack in each hand, and her hands were large and strong, deftly inserted the corners of one half under the corners of the other, and with a click and a neat, bold gesture cascaded them together. The card-player can be fairly sure that anyone who can so shuffle a pack loves cards for their own sake.

"Do you mind if my husband and I play together?" asked Mrs. Cartwright. "It's no fun for us to win one another's money."

"Of course not."



Jungle

By *W. Somerset Maugham*

We cut for deal and Gaze and I sat down. Mrs. Cartwright drew an ace and while she dealt, quickly and neatly, she chatted with Gaze of local affairs, but I was aware that she appraised me. She had shrewd eyes and they observed you with keenness, but also with good humor.

She was a woman somewhere in the fifties—though in the East, where people age quickly, it is difficult to tell their ages—with white hair very untidily arranged, and a constant gesture with her was an impatient movement of the hand to push back a long wisp that kept falling over her forehead. You wondered why she did not by the use of a hairpin or two save herself so much trouble. Her blue eyes were large, but pale and a little tired; her face was lined and sallow; I think it was her mouth that gave it the expression, which I felt was characteristic, of caustic but tolerant irony. You saw that here was a woman who knew her mind and was never afraid to speak it.

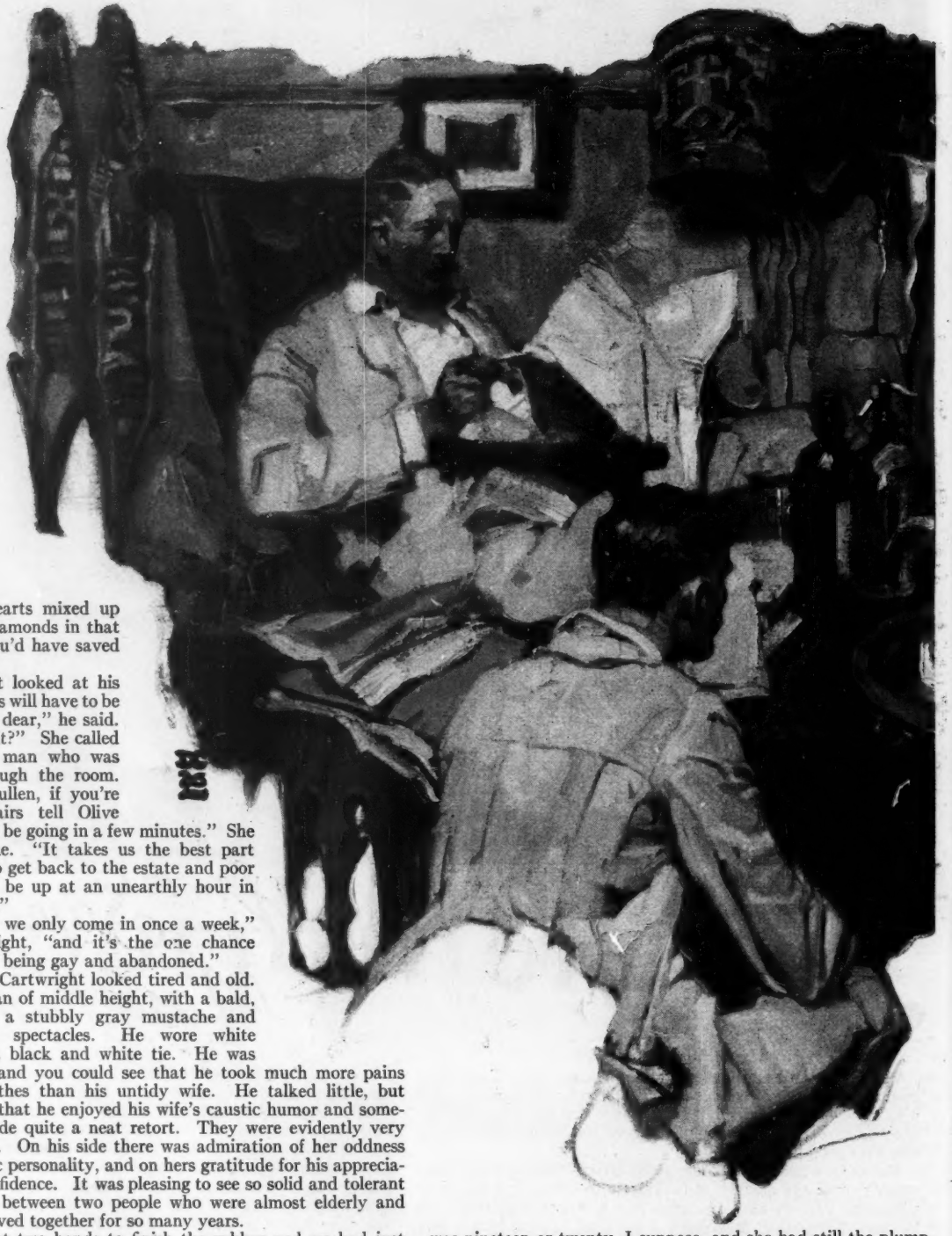
She was a chatty player and it was soon apparent that she had an agreeable knack of badinage. It was pleasantly acid, but it was amusing enough to be offensive only to a fool. You could not but quickly see that she was willing to take as much as she gave. Her large, thin mouth broke into a dry smile and her eyes shone brightly when by a lucky chance you brought off a repartee that turned the laugh against her.

I thought her a very pleasant person. I liked her frankness. I liked her quick wit. I liked her plain face. I never met a woman who obviously cared so little how she looked. It was not only her head that was untidy, everything about her was slovenly; she wore a high-necked silk blouse, but for coolness she had unbuttoned the top buttons and showed a gaunt and withered neck; the blouse was crumpled and none too clean, for she smoked innumerable cigarets and covered herself with ash. When she got up for a moment to speak to somebody I saw that her blue skirt was rather ragged at the hem and badly needed a brush, and she wore heavy, low-heeled boots. But none of this mattered. Everything she wore was perfectly in character.

And it was a pleasure to play bridge with her. She played very quickly, without hesitation, and she had not only knowledge but flair. Of course she knew Gaze's game, but I was a stranger and she soon took my measure. The team-work between her husband and herself was admirable; he was sound and cautious, but knowing his game exactly, she was able to be bold with assurance and brilliant with safety. Gaze was a player who founded a foolish optimism on the hope that his opponents would not have the sense to take advantage of his errors, and the pair of us were no match for the Cartwrights.

"I don't know what's the matter with the cards," said Gaze at last plaintively. "Even when we have every card in the pack we go down."

"It can't be anything to do with your play," answered Mrs. Cartwright, looking him full in the face with those pale blue eyes of hers, "it must be bad luck pure and simple. Now if you hadn't



had your hearts mixed up with your diamonds in that last hand you'd have saved the game."

Cartwright looked at his watch. "This will have to be the last, my dear," he said.

"Oh, will it?" She called to a young man who was passing through the room. "Oh, Mr. Bullen, if you're going up-stairs tell Olive that we shall be going in a few minutes." She turned to me. "It takes us the best part of an hour to get back to the estate and poor Theo has to be up at an unearthly hour in the morning."

"Oh, well, we only come in once a week," said Cartwright, "and it's the one chance Olive gets of being gay and abandoned."

I thought Cartwright looked tired and old. He was a man of middle height, with a bald, shiny head, a stubbly gray mustache and gold-rimmed spectacles. He wore white ducks and a black and white tie. He was rather neat and you could see that he took much more pains with his clothes than his untidy wife. He talked little, but it was plain that he enjoyed his wife's caustic humor and sometimes he made quite a neat retort. They were evidently very good friends. On his side there was admiration of her oddness and eccentric personality, and on hers gratitude for his appreciation and confidence. It was pleasing to see so solid and tolerant an affection between two people who were almost elderly and must have lived together for so many years.

It took but two hands to finish the rubber and we had just ordered a final gin and bitters when Olive came down.

"Do you really want to go already, Mumsey?" she asked.

Mrs. Cartwright looked at her daughter with fond eyes. "Yes, darling. It's nearly half past eight. It'll be ten before we get our dinner."

"Darn our dinner," said Olive gaily.

"Let her have one more dance before we go," suggested Cartwright.

"Not one. You must have a good night's rest."

Cartwright looked at Olive with a smile. "If your mother has made up her mind, my dear, we may just as well give in without any fuss."

"She's a determined woman," said Olive, lovingly stroking her mother's wrinkled cheek.

Mrs. Cartwright patted her daughter's hand and kissed it.

Olive was not very pretty, but she looked extremely nice. She was nineteen or twenty, I suppose, and she had still the plumpness of her age; she would be more attractive when she had fined down a little. She had none of the determination that gave her mother's face so much character, but resembled her father; she had his dark eyes and slightly aquiline nose, and his look of rather weak good nature. It was plain that she was strong and healthy, her cheeks were red and her eyes were bright; she had a vitality that he had long lost.

When we separated, Gaze and I set out to walk to his house.

"What did you think of the Cartwrights?" he asked me.

"I liked them. They seemed to me very nice people. They must be a great asset in a place like this."

"I wish they came in oftener. They live a very quiet life."

"It must be dull for the girl. The father and mother seem very well satisfied with one another's company."

"Yes, it's been a great success."

"Olive is the image of her father, isn't she?"



¶ *The Bronsons were very glad to have Cartwright with them. It's not very gay on a rubber estate.*

Gaze gave me a sidelong glance. "Cartwright isn't her father. Mrs. Cartwright was a widow when he married her and Olive was born five months after her husband's death."

"Oh!"

I drew out the sound in order to put in it all I could of surprise, interest, curiosity and eagerness to know more. But Gaze said nothing and we walked the rest of the way in silence. The boy was waiting at the door as we entered the house and after a last gin *pahit* we sat down to dinner.

After dinner the boys brought in coffee and brandy and we lighted our cheroots. Gaze leaned back in his chair. He looked at me reflectively and then looked at his brandy. The boys had left the room and we were alone.

"I've known Mrs. Cartwright for over twenty years," he said slowly. "She wasn't a bad-looking woman in those days. Always untidy, but when she was young it didn't seem to matter so much. It was rather attractive. She was married to a man called Bronson. Reggie Bronson. He was a planter. He was manager of an estate up in Selantan and I was stationed at Alor Lipis. It was a much smaller place than it is now; I don't suppose there were more than twenty people in the whole community, but they had a jolly little club and we used to have a very good time.

"I remember the first time I met Mrs. Bronson as though it was yesterday. There were no cars in those days and she and Bronson had ridden in on their bicycles. Of course then she didn't look so determined as she looks now. She was much thinner, she had a nice color and her eyes seemed larger. They were very pretty blue eyes, you know, and she had a lot of dark hair. If she'd only taken more trouble with herself she'd have been rather stunning. As it was, she was the best-looking woman there."

I tried to construct in my mind a picture of what Mrs. Cartwright—Mrs. Bronson as she was then—looked like from what she was now and from Gaze's not very descriptive remarks. In the solid woman, with her well-covered bones, who sat rather heavily at the bridge table I tried to see a slight young thing with buoyant movements and graceful, easy gestures. Her chin now was very square and her nose decided, but the roundness of youth must have hidden this; her unlined skin was pink and white, and I could well imagine that the careless way in which she dressed her brown, abundant hair gave her a peculiar charm. At that period she must have worn a long skirt, a tight waist and a picture hat. Or did women in Malaya still wear the topees that you see in old numbers of the illustrated papers?

"I hadn't seen her for—oh, nearly (*Continued on page 166*)

Sun Cured



Illustrations by J. W. McGurk

¶ "*I and Ben finally sent the*

IT SEEMS there were two New Yorkers, C. L. Walters and Ernie Fretts. They met on a train Florida bound. Fretts was in the insurance business, over in Brooklyn.

"I'm in the insurance business, over in Brooklyn," said Fretts. "Handle all kinds of insurance. I started when I was just a kid, twenty years ago, and now I've got it built up so's I don't need to worry. It runs itself. I guess that's the trouble. I mean I got too much time on my hands, and I play around too much. Why, say, it's a wonder I ain't dead, the way I been going. I bet I ain't been to bed before two, three o'clock the last six months. You can't go that pace and not feel it."

"It's bound to tell on a man after a w'ile," said Walters. "Now you take me——"

"So I'm about all in," said Fretts. "And the funny part of it is I didn't realize it. I wouldn't of thought nothing about it only for the girl I got in my office. You couldn't hardly call her a girl, either; she's a woman about fifty-three and looks like a Channel swimmer. That's the kind to have in your office. I had a regular Miss America once, the first year I was in business for myself, and we were so busy petting each other that we couldn't even answer the phone. I didn't sell enough insurance that year to keep her in typewriter erl. The smartest play I ever made in my life was getting rid of her.

"This woman I got now—well, you'd about as soon think of making love to a horse. And she's as smart as a man; you don't have to tell her nothing. And where do you think I got her? In an emplerment agency."

"Now you take me——" said Walters.

"So as I was telling you, I come in the office one day last week, along about noon, and hadn't been to bed in thirty-six hours, and Miss Clancy—that's the woman I got in the office—she give me one look and said, 'Mr. Fretts,' she said, 'don't think I am butting in on your private affairs, but you better be careful or you will kill yourself. If you will take my advice,' she said, 'lay off for a month or two and go to Florida or somewheres and rest up. Get away from these friends of yours for a w'ile.'

"She said, 'You know you can trust me to handle the business,' she said, 'and if you will take a vacation for a month or two, you will feel like a new man. You use' to play golf and tennis and enjer yourself in things that was good for you,' she said, 'and now look at you! I bet you ain't taken no real exercise in four years. And you don't sleep and you don't eat. Just pack up and go down to Palm Beach or Miami or some place and take a little exercise and lay around in the sun and read, or just lay there and relax yourself. You got nothing in the world to worry about and if something does come up that needs your personal attention, I will let you know. But I won't anner you,' she said, 'unless it's absolutely necessary and I don't think it will be.'

"She knows me so well that she could see what kind of shape I was in. I tell you I was a wreck, but wouldn't of thought nothing of it only for her calling my attention. I tell you I was a wreck."

"You and me both," said Walters. "Now in my case——"

"So I promised her I'd think it over and that night I went on another party—without a wink of sleep, mind you—and I told a pal of mine, Ben Drew—he's in the furniture business in Brooklyn, in partners with his brother, and a great pal of mine—I told him what Miss Clancy had said, and they was a couple of girls with us. Bonnie Werner, the girl I been going around with, she was with us, and a girl named Stevens that Ben had picked up somewheres; they were both along on the party.

"The Werner girl thinks I'm going to marry her. Fine chance!

"Anyway, she overheard me telling Ben about this Florida idear and she was all ears. She made some crack about Palm Beach being a grand place for a honeymoon. I guess she thought I was steweder than I really was. I kept right on talking to Ben and he was cock-eyed and got all steamed up over the idear and said he would go along with me. He would of been right on this train, too, only for his brother getting sick. But he's going to jern me next week."

"I tried to persuade a friend of mine——"

"We got rid of the girls and sat up all that night in a poker game and I was half asleep, and at that I win over seven hundred dollars. We was playing deuces wild and they was one hand where I had three deuces and drew to them and caught a five and nine of clubs. Well, I and a fella named Garvey bet back and forth and he finally called me and laid down a deuce and three tens. I was so gone by this time that I couldn't talk, so I just throwed down my hand face up and somebody said, 'My Lord! A straight flush!' So they give me the pot and I thought all the w'ile that what I had was four nines. That shows——"

"I DON'T like deuces wild," said Walters. "What's the——"

"I finally got home about noon and called up the office and then slept five or six hours and by that time I was ready for another party. But when I showed up at the office on Wednesday, Miss Clancy bawled me out again and I promised I'd take her advice. Well, I hadn't played golf or tennis for years and meanw'ile I'd moved three or four times and when I come to look for my golf-clubs and tennis racket, well, they'd disappeared. And I couldn't find a bathing-suit either, or my fishing-tackle. So all this stuff I'm taking along, it's all new; I had to buy an entire new outfit—seventy-some dollars for a set of golf-clubs and a bag, fourteen dollars for a tennis racket, and thirty-odd dollars for fishing-tackle. And besides that, a bathing-suit that I paid thirty-two dollars for it, but it'll knock 'em dead.

"I don't know how my golf game will be after laying off so long;

By Ring W. Lardner

The Vacation *of a* Good Fellow



girls home mad and we stayed and got in a crap game."

I expect it'll come back to me after the first couple of days. The last time I played was out on Long Island, at the Engineers'; must of been four, five years ago. I remember I shot an eighty-seven and win over a hundred dollars. Tennis is my game, though, and I can't hardly wait to get at it again. What I'm planning to do is get up early in the morning, have breakfast, play two or three sets of tennis, then go swimming and maybe lay around on the beach for an hour; have lunch and then get in eighteen holes of golf and another little swim; then have my dinner, probably up in my room, and go to bed around nine, ten o'clock. Three weeks and I'll be in the pink!"

"Now you take me," said Walters, "and——"

"Yes," said Fretts, "but you probably use some judgment, or maybe you're married and don't——"

"No, I'm——"

"I don't believe they's a man living could of went the pace I been going and stood up under it. Ben Drew—he's a pal of mine—he says I'm a marvel. He said, 'Ernie, you're a marvel!' Why listen: Here's what I did three weeks ago, just for an example. That was right after New Year's eve. Of course I was on parties morning, night and noon all through the holidays and wound up with a bat that started New Year's eve and lasted till Monday morning, the third. I slept a w'ile Monday forenoon and showed up at the office about three o'clock. Miss Clancy—the girl I got in the office—she give me a message to call up a pal of mine, Ben Drew.

"I called him up and he had a date with a girl he had picked up somewheres named Stevens, and would I and my girl come along. That's a girl named Bonnie Werner that I been going with. She thinks I'm going to marry her, and I suppose everybody's entitled to their opinion. Anyway, I couldn't leave Ben in a hole so I said all right and he and I got together around five o'clock and loaded up on cocktails and later we jerned the girls and made the rounds and wound up at a Black and Tan, and I and Ben both got pie-eyed and finally sent the girls home mad and we stayed and got in a crap game and I win two, three hundred dollars. The game broke up at noon.

"I went straight to the office and Miss Clancy give me a message to call up Miss Werner; that's the girl I was with the night before, Monday. She was sore on account of me not seeing her home and said if I didn't take her out this night—Tuesday—why, it was all off between her and I. Well, Tuesday nights we always have a big poker game and I told her I couldn't get out of the game, but I would see her Wednesday night. I was praying she'd stay sore and carry out her threat and I wouldn't have to bother with her no more. But no; she backed down and said Wednesday would be k. o.

"So I got in the poker game and it not only lasted all Tuesday night and all day Wednesday, but all night Wednesday night. I got outside of five, six bottles of Ben Drew's Scotch and win a hundred and seventy dollars. I snatched three, four hours sleep Thursday forenoon and when I showed up at the office, the girl, the Werner girl, was waiting for me.

"To keep her from making a scene I had to promise to devote the rest of the week to her, and the next three nights, we made the rounds of all the different jernts, dancing and drinking rat-poison. Now that's just one week, but it's like all the other weeks. No wonder Miss Clancy said I looked terrible!"

"A man can't go that pace and not feel it. I know in my case—"

"So I need just this kind of a trip—go down there where I don't know nobody and no girls pestering me all the w'ile, and be outdoors all day and exercise and breathe God's fresh air. Three, four weeks of that life and the boys in Brooklyn and New York won't recognize me. And besides that, I never been to Florida and I'm anxious to look it over and see if it's all they claim. They tell me a man can pick up some great bargains there now and if I find something I like, I'm liable to grab off a piece of it, not for speculation, but maybe build myself a little place to spend the winter months. I hate cold weather and snow and they's no sense in a man in my position hanging around New York and freezing to death when I could just as well be enjering myself in a clean, wholesome way, in the sunshine."



¶ *"Miss Clancy looks like a Channel swimmer."*

"You take me, now——"

"You're probably a fella that uses some judgment and eat regular, or maybe you got a wife and family to make you behave. But I got nobody only my friends, though I guess I got more of them than any man in Brooklyn. That's one of my troubles,



¶ *"From the first day I didn't wear nothing but dinner clothes. You'd have to get Miss Werner or one of the other girls to tell you the different places we went."*

having too many friends, but only for them, I wouldn't be where I am, I mean in business. A man in my business has got to have friends, or they wouldn't have no business."

"In my business, too. I'm——"

"This must be Fayetteville we're coming to," said Fretts. "I've got to send a wire to a pal of mine, Ben Drew. He's in Brooklyn now, but he's going to jern me next week down in Miami."

IT SEEMS that the two New Yorkers happened to be on the same train a month later, northward bound from Jacksonville.

"Hello, there," said Walters.

"Fine," replied Fretts, regarding the other somewhat vaguely.

"I come down on the same train with you a month ago," said Walters.

"That's right," said Fretts. "We come down on the same train together."

"Well, what do you think of Florida?"

"No place like it in the world!" said Fretts, warming up. "Say, I could write a book! I wished I'd kept a diary of the month I been there. Only nobody would believe it."

"Where was you? Palm Beach?"

"No, Miami. That is, I guess we drove up to Palm Beach one night. I don't know."

"Where did you stop in Miami?"

"Over at the Beach, at the Flamingo."

"What did they charge you there?"

"I've got no idear. I paid them with a check," said Fretts.

"It's American plan, ain't it?"

"No. Yes, yes, it's American plan."

"And how was the meals?"

"Meals! I don't know. I didn't hear anybody say anything about them."

"I thought——"

"After this, I'm going to take all my vacations in the winter and spend them right there. That's the Garden Spot of God's Green Footstool!"

"So you bought yourself a place?"

"No, I didn't buy nothing; that is, no real estate. I met some guy the second day that was talking about a big bargain in some development he was interested in, and I promised I'd go out and look at it. He called up a couple of times to remind me of my promise, so to keep him from pestering me, I finally did go out there, but they was no moon, so I couldn't tell much about it."

"I thought——"

"Listen till you hear something funny. When I got to the hotel, they told me my room was still occupied, but the guy was just moving out and I could move in inside of an hour. Well, they made the fella pack up in a hurry and he overlooked two bottles of Plymouth gin. So there was the two bottles staring me in the eye and I was afraid he'd come back after them, so I phoned up to another fella's room that had rode over with me in the taxi from the station and he come down and we had ten, eleven Tom Collinses just as fast as we could drink them.

"Then we filled up the both bottles with water and fixed them like they hadn't been opened, and sure enough, the bird come back for his treasure. He said he was on his way to Key West and had got clear over pretty near to Miami station when he recalled leaving the gin and he had enough time to come back for it and still catch his train yet. That's one thing about those Florida trains—you can't miss them no matter what time you get there. He said it was a good thing for him that his room had been inherited by an honest man. I'd like to heard what he said when he took his first swig out of those bottles.

"WELL, I and the other fella, the fella that split the gin with me—he's a fella named Leo Hargrave, from Cleveland; got a foundry there or something—the two of us went up in his room and polished off a bottle of Scotch and then it was time to dress for dinner. That's all I done about dinner the whole month I was in Miami—I dressed for it, but I never got it. Hargrave said he knew a swell jernt out near Hialeah and we hired a car and drove out there and it was a place where you dined and danced, but we wasn't hungry and we didn't have nobody to dance with. So we just ordered some drinks——"

"Did you have any trouble getting drinks?"

"Yes. You had to call a waiter. Well, we stayed there till pretty close to midnight and then drove back towards the beach and stopped at another jernt where you play roulette. There's a game I always been wild about and I'd of been satisfied to send for my baggage and settle right down for the month. But Hargrave was dance mad and he said we would have to find some girls to travel around with. He said he knew one girl; he would call her up in the morning, and maybe she had a friend.

"I told him to never mind about a friend, because it's been my experience that when you ask a girl to bring along a girl friend, the girl friend generally always looks like she had charge of the linen room at a two dollar hotel. So we stayed up till the telegraph office was open and then I sent a day letter to New York, to a girl I been going around with, a girl named Bonnie Werner, and told her to jump in an upper and jern me."

"Did she come?"

"Sure, she come. She thinks I'm going to marry her. But she couldn't get there till two, three days later and in the meanw'ile, I run around with Hargrave and his dame. I wasn't lonesome, though; not as long as they was plenty of Scotch and the roulette w'eel, and besides that, I found a poker game, to say nothing about a couple dandy fellas lives there at the beach and love to just sit around and hit up the old barber shop harmony—Jim Allison and Jess Andrew.

"But I didn't really strike my stride till Miss Werner got in. From that time on, I went some pace! And of course it was even worse when Ben Drew showed up. He's a pal of mine, in partners with his brother in the furniture business in Brooklyn. He was going to come down with me, but his brother got sick and held him up a week. He brought a girl named Stevens that he picked up somewheres, and with Miss Werner and I, and Ben Drew and the Stevens dame, and Hargrave and his girl, that made six of us that stuck together all the w'ile; that is, for the first few nights. After that, we'd get the girls all wore out by one, two o'clock and chase them home and then I and Ben and Hargrave, we'd play the w'eel or sit in a game of stud.

"It was the same schedule, day after day, the whole time I was there. The party would start out along about seven, eight o'clock in the evening and go to whatever place we hadn't been to the night before. We'd dance till, say, one o'clock and then chase the women home and do a little serious gambling. The poker game generally broke up a little before noon. That would give us fellas the afternoon to sleep, w'ile the girls would do their shopping or go to the polo or waste their time some way another. About six o'clock, I'd get up and have the barber come in and shave me and then I'd dress and be all set for the roll-call."

"But I thought——"

"From the first day, I didn't wear nothing but dinner clothes. And I brought along a trunk full of white pants and knickers that I never even unpacked.

"You'd have to get Miss Werner or one of the other girls to tell you the different places we went. They all looked alike to me—just jernts, with tables and waiters and an orchestra."

"But the weather was beautiful——"

"So I heard somebody say. I guess it's a great climate, if that's what a man is looking for. They say California's another garden spot and that's another place I've always intended to go. But of course it takes longer."

"The California climate," said Walters, "is probably just as good——"

"I've always intended to go out there. But of course it takes longer. Four, five days on a train is too much. A fella don't get no sun or air. I always feel cooped up on a train."

"How was the golf?"

"I didn't get to play golf; never had my clubs out of the bag. But I heard somebody telling Ben Drew that they had four, five fine courses around Miami."

"Play any tennis?"

"No, I didn't have time for tennis. They got some swell courts right by the hotel, but even at that, when you change into your tennis clothes and play four, five sets and then take a bath and dress again, why, it means a waste of two hours."

"Go fishing?"

"Fishing! That's a whole day! And as far as bathing is concerned, why, it looks like they was a law that you couldn't swim only at noontime, just when a man's ready for the hay."

"How far is the ocean from the hotel where you stopped?"

"I don't know. I didn't get over there. You see you can't do everything at a place like that. It would wear you out. I'm thirty-eight years old and when a man gets that age, you've got to watch your step. You can't go in for athaletics like you was a kid.

"I'm in the insurance business, in Brooklyn, and one of the things we learn in our business is that a man is taking chances if he goes in too strong for sports after a certain age. You can't be a youngster all your life."

"Did your friends go home ahead of you?"

"Do you mean Ben Drew and Miss Werner and the Stevens girl? No. Ben, he's back there in a compartment dead to the world and he said he'd shoot anybody that woke him up this side of Manhattan Transfer.

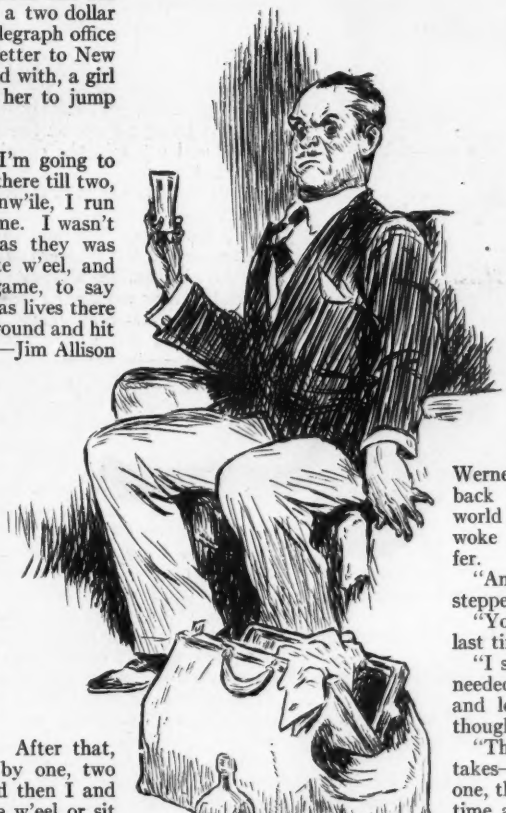
"And the girls—they look like they'd just stepped out of a waste-pipe."

"You look pretty good yourself, better than last time I seen you."

"I should! A trip like this was just what I needed—away from the office a whole month and longer and ain't even given business a thought.

"That's where so many men make mistakes—not taking a vacation; or if they do take one, they keep in touch with their office all the time and sperl their whole trip, worrying. I got a girl that can run my business pretty near as good as I can myself—not a girl, either; a woman about fifty-three years old; a Miss Clancy.

"She's the one that realized the shape I was in and insisted on me taking this trip. And how her face will light up when I walk in that office Monday morning—or maybe Monday afternoon—and she sees what this has done for me!"



"We filled up the both bottles with water. I'd like to heard what that fella said when he took his first swig."

Secrets of the White House



© Davis & Sanford

¶ *The first Mrs. Woodrow Wilson.*

THE first time I saw President Wilson was about one o'clock on the afternoon of March 4th, 1913, immediately after he first entered the White House following his return from the inauguration ceremonies. I was standing by the small White House elevator on the second or main floor when he came up to it, hat in hand.

"Welcome to your new home, Mr. President," I greeted him, at the same moment offering my hand.

He bowed low and smiled. "Oh! you are Mrs. Jaffray, aren't you? I am happy to meet you."

Just then Mrs. Wilson came up and started to introduce us but the President graciously said: "Mrs. Jaffray and I are already friends."

It is difficult to give an exact picture of this first Mrs. Wilson. President Wilson, I am sure, loved her deeply and she was a wonderful mother, but her nature was limited. She was never the gay and amusing woman of the world.

To speak frankly, I think that Mrs. Hulbert—better known as Mrs. Peck—filled, for some years, this part of Mr. Wilson's life. For a long period she was an intimate of the entire family. Mr. Wilson himself became interested in her through the problem of helping her son.

Their friendship grew until Mrs. Hulbert became a trusted and close friend.

It was in Mrs. Hulbert's house in Bermuda that the Wilsons spent part of the month of December previous to the inauguration, but Mrs. Hulbert was not there at the time.

During the first two and a half years Mr. Wilson was at the White House—the years covering the period of the death of the first Mrs. Wilson, the President's period of mourning and his subsequent marriage to Mrs. Galt—Mrs. Hulbert made three visits to the Executive Mansion. Two were before the death of the first Mrs. Wilson. Her final visit was some three months later, and in reality was nothing more than a long call.

During the first year of the Wilson administration Mrs. Hulbert was a White House guest at one time for four or five days. I liked her. She was amusing and clever, and she had a delightful sense of humor. At this time the President's own family were not particularly fond of her, but this did not keep her from being a guest at the White House. I saw a good deal of her, and often in the evening she would drop in my rooms for a chat.

The last time she was there, following the death of the first Mrs. Wilson, I told her rather facetiously that these were her golden moments. She only smiled in answer.

Three or four weeks after the defeat of Mr. Taft and the election of Mr. Wilson in November, 1912, a note had come from Mrs. Wilson asking if I would be good enough to come down to Princeton, New Jersey, to see her. The Wilsons were living in a rather small and unpretentious house in the old university town.

I replied that I would be delighted to come, and shortly before two o'clock on a day in December I arrived in Princeton and took a taxi to the Wilsons' temporary home. In response to my knock a maid showed me into a comfortable sitting-room and a minute later I was shaking hands with a rather plump, sweet, brown-eyed woman who introduced herself: "I am Mrs. Wilson and I suppose you are Mrs. Jaffray . . . It is very nice of you to come all the way down here."

I told her I was delighted to come and that I only hoped I could be of some real service to her. For almost three hours we chatted over White House affairs, and I explained to her exactly how the Executive Mansion was run, gave her precise information about the food costs—which are the only expense in connection with the running of the White House that is met out of the President's salary—and went over the general details of the management.

When I had finished she put her hand on my arm. "My! what a difficult house," she said. "We certainly want you to stay on and take care of things just as you have for the last four years. You will, won't you?"

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Wilson," I answered. "Just let us arrange for me to stay three months and then at the end of that time we can see how we like each other."

As a matter of fact I soon grew to be very fond of Mrs. Wilson. My first impression of her was that she was just a little unsophisticated—I mean that the great social and official whirl of the White House seemed to be a little out of her sphere and background. Most of her years had been spent in the cloistered atmosphere of a small university town. The busy, ambitious, intriguing

By *Elizabeth Jaffray*, *who for* 17 Years

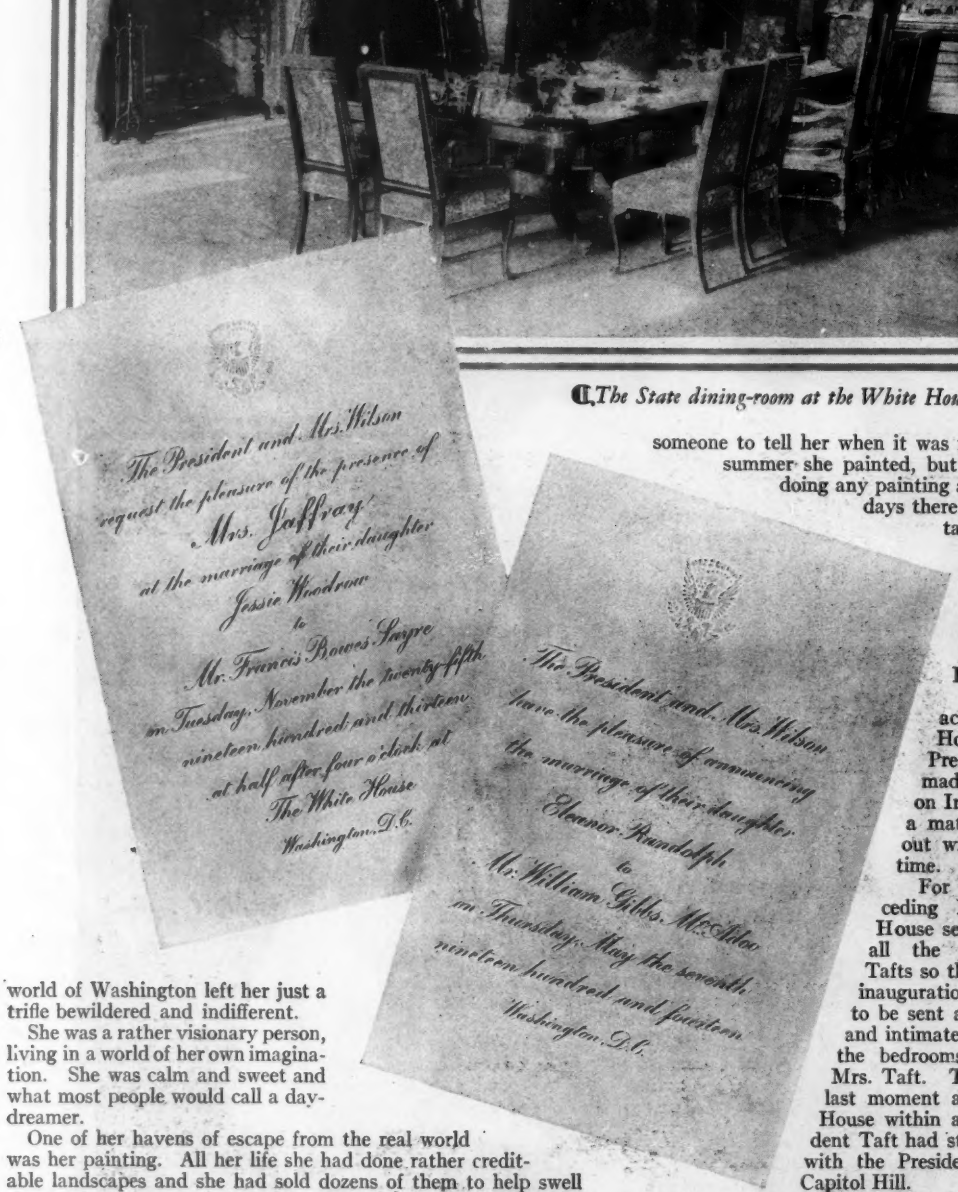
Was Housekeeper of the Executive Mansion



¶ *An old photograph of Mrs. Hulbert—formerly Mrs. Peck—with Mr. Wilson while he was President of Princeton University.*



¶ *The State dining-room at the White House.*



world of Washington left her just a trifle bewildered and indifferent.

She was a rather visionary person, living in a world of her own imagination. She was calm and sweet and what most people would call a day-dreamer.

One of her havens of escape from the real world was her painting. All her life she had done rather creditable landscapes and she had sold dozens of them to help swell the slender income of a university professor.

In 1913, when the Wilsons spent the summer at the Churchill home in Cornish, New Hampshire, Mr. Churchill had a small cottage on the place fitted up as a studio for Mrs. Wilson. Often she would spend most of her day there painting landscapes. Time meant little to her and as a rule we would have to send someone to tell her when it was meal-time. All that first summer she painted, but I do not remember her doing any painting at the White House. Her days there were of course too much taken up with the semi-official duties of the First Lady of the Land.

The Wilsons came to Washington on March 3rd, the day before the Inauguration.

Now theoretically the actual transfer of the White House from the outgoing President to his successor is made at the stroke of twelve on Inauguration Day. And as a matter of fact, it is carried out within a half-hour of that time.

For three or four days preceding March 4th the White House servants had been packing all the personal effects of the Tafts so that on the morning of the inauguration everything was ready to be sent away except the personal and intimate possessions that were in the bedrooms of President Taft and Mrs. Taft. These were packed at the last moment and they left the White House within a few minutes after President Taft had stepped into the motor-car with the President-elect to be driven to Capitol Hill.

The personal luggage—trunks, boxes and bags—of the Wilsons were sent to the White House on this same morning of March 4th, and by eleven-thirty the servants were busy laying out the President's clothes and his personal effects in his private rooms.

For some strange reason Inauguration Day and the change of

administration has always seemed to me a rather sad time. This sweeping away of every memento and reminder of the out-going President leaves the whole household depressed and uncertain.

One of the first interviews I had with Mr. Wilson in the White House was about an item of $250 which had been previously expended to buy coverings for the furniture in the corridor, and for which there was no available fund. Although at the time it was suggested that there were no funds at hand to pay for them, Mrs. Taft had wanted these covers made particularly so that the White House would be in beautiful shape when the new President came. So it was that there had been an expenditure of $250 and there was no possible means of paying it out of the regular White House funds.

I explained this to President Wilson—how everything was in order upon his taking over the White House except this one matter, which really constituted an illegal expenditure.

"That is very quickly settled, Mrs. Jaffray," he told me. Without further comment he reached for his check-book and personally wrote out a check for the amount.

IN ALL my eight years of intimate association with Mr. Wilson I never found him anything but generous and more than willing to do his share in meeting his obligations. A question of money never arose without his wanting to pay the amount in full and let it go at that.

Mr. Wilson's income as a professor in and President of Princeton, and even as Governor of New Jersey, had never been a large one. With the expense of clothing and educating three daughters and of keeping up the appearances necessary for a public man, there was very little money left over.

As a consequence, when the Wilsons came to the White House they had few clothes. I remember well that the President's first White House gift to Mrs. Wilson was a set of sable furs—the first fine furs that Mrs. Wilson had ever owned.

The President himself always looked well-dressed, but never had anything like the number of suits that other Presidents have had. Brooks, his personal valet, was always getting after him about his clothes. I recall a conversation I overheard one day in the President's bedroom between Brooks and the President.

"Mr. President, we've just got to get a new velvet collar on this dress coat," Brooks said.

"Oh, that collar is all right, Brooks," the President replied. "Why, I can wear that another year without any difficulty."

I don't want to give the impression that either President Wilson or the first Mrs. Wilson was in any way penurious. At the slightest question of money he was willing to lay out every cent he had. In my own case he was always more than kind and generous about little remembrances and presents. When I had to make trips to New York to buy White House furnishings or linen or one thing or another, both President Taft and President Wilson insisted that all my expenses be paid either from the government expense account or by themselves personally; and as the government allowed me only $4.50 a day for hotel bills, the result was that they insisted on paying from their own pockets the necessary additional expenses. With the advent of President Harding and President Coolidge, this custom was discontinued, and I always had to meet all my own extra expenses.

What I am trying to make clear is that while President Wilson cared nothing about clothes—any more than he did about food, for its own sake—he was always extremely generous and wanted in every way to do more than his share.

On their first Christmas at the White House, President Wilson and Mrs. Wilson gave me a beautiful gold watch. As a matter of fact I had had my watch stolen in New York and they presented me with one to take its place.

IN A way President Wilson, like Mrs. Wilson, was visionary and more or less impractical. As I have already written, he was little interested in many of the every-day material things that fill a good part of men's lives. Food and clothes were of minor importance to him. He had no extravagances at all—except the extravagance of buying beautiful and useful books.

Of all the men who were in the White House during the years I was there, I think President Wilson was the poorest when his administration began. But from his salary during the eight years that he was resident he was able (*Continued on page 184*)



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¶ *Mr. Wilson when he was Governor of New Jersey, with Mrs. Wilson and their daughters (left to right) Margaret, Jessie and Eleanor.*

By ARTHUR SOMERS ROCHE

Illustrations by C. D. Williams

The Old Problem— *Was* Money *made to* Spend *or* Save?



¶ "*He was a perfectly steady man until he came into some money and went suddenly insane.*"

ONE thing alone has life definitely taught me, and that is that anyone can point me out a fool while no one can point me out a sage. A hundred proverbs tell us of the fool; the oldsters of every generation define his ways. The epithet "fool" comes trippingly to every tongue. But what puzzles me is that if there were no white, no one would be able to say that there was any black. It is by contrast alone that definition comes. If water had never been created, the word "dry" would never have been invented. So how can anyone be termed a fool when there are no wise?

Which seems the logical place to introduce "Pants" Regan.

I suppose that you who read these lines have never worn a pair of pants. Breeches, perhaps, or more probably trousers. But pants are distinctly vulgar things worn only by those who affect sleeve garters and suspenders. Oh, well, dismiss the butler, tell the footman to take the Peke out for an airing—wouldn't it be great if a bulldog ate him up?—send the limousine around the corner so that your English chauffeur won't overhear our vulgar talk, and let's be common for a while. Let's see if we can't go half an hour without mentioning Southampton or Biarritz, and pretend that we didn't always have oodles of jack

"Hey, Pants, where you going with the boy?"

"Wonder where that Regan kid is hiding—in the left leg of them pants or the right?"

"Father's pants will soon fit Willie."

Humor is a wonderful thing, isn't it? It's great to be able to sit on a cracker barrel, whittling a pine stick, and making the other corner-store loafers rock with merriment at your wit.

And suppose tears come to a grubby freckled face, and little fists knot impotently, what of it? It's good for a kid to learn to take joshing. How are they going to make their way in the world if they're sensitive and shy and carry into maturity the lovely gifts of childhood? The murder for which I shall be hanged will be that of the man who hurt a child's feelings.

The Regans weren't much. Just plain people who minded their own business, but committed the unforgivable sin of being poor. Perhaps Jim Regan, the father of Pants, was as shiftless as his detractors said. Certainly a grown man ought to be able to buy an occasional suit of clothes for his little boy. What if his wife was delicate and needed medical attendance frequently? Couldn't he step out from his sixteen-dollar-a-week job as night-watchman at the bicycle factory and get something better?

That Regan was honest and industrious didn't count for much in public opinion. He was the father of a crew of ragamuffins, and no asset to the community. When he died people wondered at the grief of his family. You see, people didn't know that poor, plodding Jim Regan, who had no education and little ability, had possessed the gift of kindly understanding, so that even while his family resented his failure in business, they loved him for his success in life. He told the most wonderful stories, all about poor folks to whom the Little People pointed out pots of gold. He could get you to make believe that the cold corned beef was really quail. He could say "Pass the champagne" in

A Very Wise Fool



a way that made you believe the water had become wine. Perhaps, in his way, he worked miracles.

Certainly he instilled ambition into the heart of little Pants.

"Sure," he would say in his lilting brogue, "when you're a millionaire living in a house made of gold and diamonds and eating steak for breakfast, you'll laugh at the days when you weren't so rich. But remember, the first step towards riches is eddication."

Riches! The things one did when one was rich. The yachts, the private cars, the prancing horses, with yourself lolling back in the barouche smoking a fifteen-cent cigar, and looking at the toes of the shoes which had a fresh five-cent shine every morning of the year. Ice-cream twice a week, and dollar dinners at the Parker House. A fresh shirt twice a week and a clean collar every single day of the year. Theayters, too, with a seventy-five-cent seat in the front row of the first balcony. And most glorious of all, people whispering as you passed, "There goes Pants Regan. He's worth every cent of forty thousand dollars."

NO, NOT most glorious, for there was something even greater than the spoken word, and that was the written.

"Our genial fellow townsman, Mr. James (Pants) Regan, Jr., son of the late James Regan, one of the pioneers of the bicycle industry, dropped into his old home town today, and ye editor had the proud privilege of eating dinner with him at the Parker House. Wealth has not changed Mr. Regan. He is proud of the nickname 'Pants.' He likes to think of the days when he wore his father's cut-down breeches. There's nothing of the snob about Pants Regan.

" 'Yes, Mr. Morgan and I have many interests in common. I'm afraid he made a mistake in that bank consolidation, and he admits that he'd have done better if he'd followed my advice. The President? In the best of health. We lunched together last Tuesday.'

"To the suggestion recently advanced in the Aldermanic Chamber that a street be named after him, Mr. Regan had little to say. His attitude seemed to be that if the town wished to honor him, it would be very gratifying to him, but that it was a matter which delicacy forbade him to discuss.

"Mr. Regan will be in town only a few days, leaving immediately after his speech at the high school graduation exercises."

Trudging along Main Street, a trifle bent beneath the load of groceries he was delivering to the Shaws, little Pants would look the other way as he passed Wilkins field where other urchins of his years were playing scrub, or one ol' cat, or perhaps even "sides." All right for them who didn't have to work, but he'd get his fun later on when the newspaper would print pieces like the imaginary one above which he had just visualized.

Fame! Glory! Riches! He'd have them all some day. And he'd not neglect the education which was the bridge from poverty to the other things.

There were three children, of whom Pants was the eldest. When his father died, Pants was nine, Mary was eight and Jerry was seven. It was a tough struggle from the start. The fraternal lodge thousand-dollar insurance policy seemed, when it was paid, nothing less than affluence. But Mrs. Regan's sister's husband developed tuberculosis, and two hundred and fifty dollars would take him and his family to Tucson, Arizona. And there were funeral expenses, and there were more relatives. Four months after her widowhood began, Mrs. Regan's little fortune was gone, and she was taking in washing, while Pants was delivery boy for the grocer.

Four dollars every Saturday night Pants put in his mother's calloused palm.

"You're the good son to your old mother," she would say to him.

"Huh!" he would reply. "Four dollars ain't nothing."

"Show me the lad your age who can earn a wage like that," she would boast.

And Pants would blush with pardonable pride. In 1891 few were the delivery boys who commanded such a salary. But Pants Regan was a hard-working boy who never lost customers by delivering the wrong packages. The heart of Pants might be with the gang playing mumblety-peg, but his body went straight up the walk to Mrs. Marinelli or Mrs. Epstein. Old man Schulte used to brag that no grocer in Shamokin County had as good a delivery boy.

"Smart as a steel trap and don't waste no time skylarking."

His teachers in the public school spoke highly of Pants Regan. Not merely was he a bright child, but he had plenty of application. They encouraged him in his dreams of college and university. Industrious students frequently obtained scholarships, and got jobs waiting on table and tutoring the dull sons of the rich. No reason why Pants Regan shouldn't go to college.

Except that fate ordained otherwise. For in Pants' fourteenth year, when he had just entered high school, the delicate health

of his mother yielded to the hundred and one exactions made upon it.

Upon the broadest shoulders must the burden be placed. Mary was a girl, not quite thirteen; Jerry was a wisp of a lad, not yet twelve. There were state institutions, orphan asylums, poor farms, and the likes of them.

But, glory be, you'd not want a Regan in a place like that, would you? I guess you don't know much about the Regans. Kings, all of them, in the days of Ireland's glory. And the Molloys—Mrs. Regan had been born a Molloy—were the finest family that ever came out of Galway. Children of such stock as this could starve, but they couldn't beg.

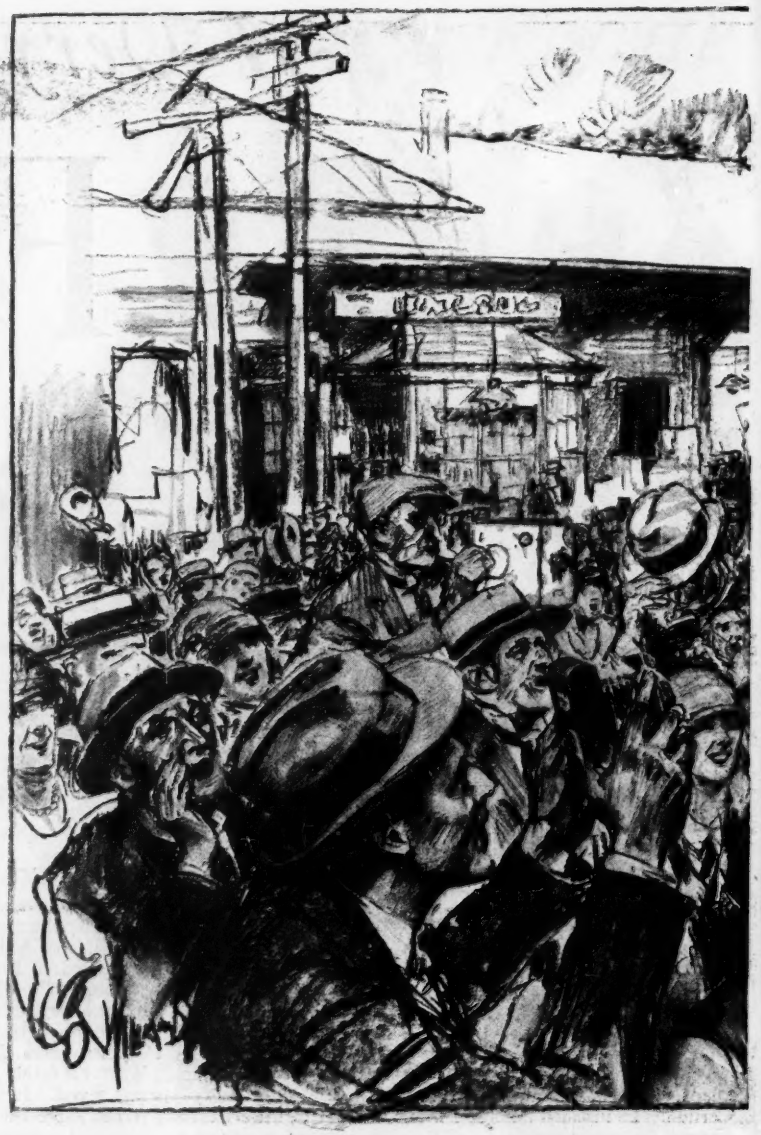
Besides, look at the heft of Pants Regan. Anyone would take him to be sixteen. And wasn't old man Schulte willing to give him a regular job as driver of the delivery wagon and pay him nine dollars a week, besides letting him have his groceries at cost?

Neither Efficiency nor Service blighted the earth back in the mid-nineties. People said, "There ought to be a law." But in those innocent days they were content to let it go at that. The wish had not yet become the actuality.

So the county officials winked as they passed the humble two-roomed cottage where Pants installed his family. Why pick on a kid who was not only able to take care of himself, but was housing and feeding and clothing his brother and sister? There ought to be a law against that sort of thing, but some of the biggest men that this country ever produced had beginnings just like this.

The nickname of "Pants" had ceased to hurt its owner's pride. In fact, Pants had no pride save that elemental thing in him which forbade the acceptance of charity. Of course, you could accept cast-off clothing and things like that, but money was tabu. You were an American, and anyone that tried to tip you was liable to listen to a vivid and unflattering description of himself.

Imagine, you whose breakfast melon costs eighty cents; whose cup of coffee costs thirty-five; whose rasher of bacon and eggs costs seventy; whose toast costs twenty-five; and who are in too much of a hurry to wait for the change from the three one-dollar bills you gave to the waiter, what fare, what shelter and what apparel Pants provided for himself and his family. I grant you that there was more purchasing power to the dollar thirty years ago than there is today, but even so, oh, even so.



Oh, dreams come true! There were two local reporters and

Worth Bagley died trying to land on the Cuban shore; Teddy went up San Juan Hill; Dewey finished his breakfast and then the Spaniards. But if you want to see the real hero of the days of 'ninety-eight, take a look at Pants Regan.

For Pants discovered that the town was going to provide a night-school for those whom circumstances debarred from the ordinary schools. And on the same day that he heard this marvelous news, he heard of something else. This later bit of news was to the effect that the town had decided to let the municipality remove the ashes from the householders' back doors, and that you could get a job that paid twelve dollars a week if you didn't mind working from two in the morning until six. You see, the town council didn't want dust blown about the streets in the daytime.

Twelve and nine make twenty-one. Three dollars a day; just twice what unskilled labor was being paid at that time. Gosh, think what a man could do with money like that! New dresses for Mary; maybe a bicycle for Jerry. Not a Dayton Flyer, of course, but a good second-hand machine that anyone would be proud to ride.

No need of telling the town authorities that you had a job with Schulte. Sleep? Except on Saturdays, when you worked until eleven, you were always through delivering groceries by six; unless Mrs. Rafferty forgot to order until the last minute. So you could come home and eat the supper which Mary had cooked for you and be sound asleep by eight o'clock. That meant five and a half solid hours of rest. Plenty for anyone. In fact, it would be sort of exciting faring forth from your home in the middle of the night. Sort of romantic and thrilling.

Night-school? Huh, you were sick of school anyways.

"Looka here, Pants Regan," protested Mary, "all you've done for years is talk about what an education would do for you. You ain't going to give it up."

"Aw, study hurts me eyes," lied Pants.

"And anyway, you ain't a horse," said Mary. "There ain't anybody can hold down two tough jobs like those."

"I'm strong as a bull," asserted Pants.

"But you'll be a laborer all your life without you learn things," protested his sister. "Jerry can do without his bike, and me, I wouldn't know what to do with another dress."

"Then why was you crying all last night because you spilled something on that plaid skirt of yours?" accused Pants. His voice, that of recent months had begun to change, sounded suddenly bass. "No more nonsense. I guess I'm old enough to know what I want."

Heroes of 'ninety-eight who gave your lives to your country, I salute you. But to Pants Regan I make deep obeisance. He gave up his ambitions to his family. A drab sacrifice, but needing a man to do it. He threw away thumbed schoolbooks. Of what possible value could they ever be to him again? Fame and riches he put forever behind him; in their places he substituted the altars of Sacrifice and Duty.

He was doomed forever to remain a manual laborer; closed were the books whose pages might have made him something else.



ight New York correspondents on Pants Regan's special train—cost, $2,500—as it steamed away for New York.

How definite is youth which, because it has so few yesterdays to look back upon, thinks that there are no more tomorrows to look forward to.

But you can't work sixteen hours a day without arousing comment. Mrs. Brainerd had a row with her cook and discharged her.

As I have made clear, this happened in the last century when cooks sometimes stayed long enough in a place to be discharged.

THUS it happened that Mrs. Brainerd opened the kitchen door in response to the knock of Schulte's delivery boy.

"One dozen eggs, two pounds of butter, two pounds of sody-crackers, a package of matches, half a pound of bacon, two pounds of lard and one dozen ears of corn. Gee, Mrs. Brainerd, you and your husband certainly do like corn, don't you?"

"It ain't me so much as it is Mist' Brainerd. He's the beatinest man for corn I ever heard tell of. Six ears ain't no more to him than one would be to most folks. I say to him, 'Ephraim Brainerd, you act like you was corn starved when you was a boy.' But, land's sakes, if the worst a body's husband does is hanker for corn, I guess a woman can put up with it."

"Especially when you got a fine husband like Banker Brainerd," said the tactful Pants.

"You're looking kinda peeked, Pants," said the housewife.

"Well, I'm kept kinda busy," admitted Pants. "Sometimes them ashes is terrible heavy."

Mrs. Brainerd nodded. "We'll have to see if we can't think of something better for you, Pants," she said.

And that very night she told her husband that she thought that the bank ought to find a place for a boy as hard-working and honest as Pants Regan.

Dignity stepped up to Pants Regan and shook him by the hand. It was all so simple. Banker Brainerd didn't think so very much of education. He'd gone a long way on just the three R's himself, and had the self-made man's contempt for book learning.

When he found that Pants could add up figures right in his head, Brainerd decided that the boy was well enough equipped to begin in the bank. Of course, he couldn't pay any such fabulous sum as the twenty-one dollars a week that Pants was now earning, but he could and would start Pants off at sixteen a week, with prospects of speedy advancement.

Night-school, with all its visions, pictured itself in the brain of Pants. For the first time in all his drab young life, there was spring in his stride and exaltation on his too-old face as, having shaken hands with Banker Brainerd, he rushed home to tell Mary and Jerry the big news. His feet were on the first rung of the ladder, and the rest would be easy.

Mary hid something behind her as he burst into the kitchen.

"What you doing home in the morning?" she asked.

"Oh, Mr. Schulte gave me an hour off. But what are you hiding behind you?"

"Nothing," she replied.

"You been crying," he accused.

"Haven't," she denied.

"Are too," he insisted. "Lemme (*Continued on page 164*)

Diplomacy Begins at *Home*



¶ *"Dear Lizzie," Kate read to Jim, "I have no help now with the crowd of thim, and the baby is very young."*

"MAMA, it says something-or-other 'through the diplomacy of Benjamin Franklin'—what's diplomacy?" asked Bernadette Oliver suddenly, out of a silence.

Bernadette, aged ten, was studying her history lesson, in the kitchen. Victor, a year younger, and Mary Marg'ret and Agnes, twins of seven and a half, were also studying. The other children of the family, Helen, who was four, Josie, who was two, and the baby, Rose Stella, were long in bed.

Jim Oliver, their father, in his favorite rattan rocker, was reading his paper, with his feet resting comfortably on the opened stove door. Jim worked on a dock, and sometimes, on these bitter winter evenings, it took him a long time to get thoroughly warm. He was a black, burly man, with the mind of a fourteen-year-old, the body of a giant, and a heart of gold.

Kate Oliver, the children's mother, and for eleven years his devoted and entirely uncriticizing wife, was at the sink. Kate washed dishes with the same ease with which other women fell gracefully into hammocks, opened novels, and stretched ringed, white hands for chocolates. She never thought of it as dish-washing, much less as a distasteful household chore; she simply did it.

While she soaped the familiar cups and plates, the blackened frying-pans, and the grater coated with gummy crumbs, her contented thoughts were on the children, her six strong, black-haired girls, and her wiry, blond boy; her thoughts were on the future, when the children should all be older; her thoughts were often, and gratefully, wandering among that bright and celestial group she reverently designated as "Our Lor'rd and the Saints."

She was a thin, flat, strong, alert woman, sandy-haired, with light eyelashes and a humorous, wide, beautiful mouth. Kate was priest, lawyer, nurse, cook, doctor, teacher to her own family, and half the neighborhood as well; she was at once advocate, prosecutor and judge. Mrs. Callahan's niece, "bot' ways," as Mrs. Callahan herself expressed it—for both Kate's mother and father had been cousins of the redoubtable, superb old Irishwoman—Kate Oliver was more like her Aunt Ag than any of the Callahan girls themselves. In her supreme concern with the affairs of all her circle, in her instant, wise judgments, in her matriarchal pronouncements, Kate promised to be a worthy successor of her kinswoman and close neighbor, when the older matron, nearing the seventies now, became ready to lay down her scepter.

Meanwhile, Kate managed her own affairs with supreme success. Jim was a master mechanic, his work would be regular as long as ships came and went in the great port, and Kate could depend upon her sixty dollars a week. She took it all, and gave him back three dollars for car-fare and cigarets, packing him every morning a hot, nourishing lunch that he could not have equaled at any price in the neighborhood of the dock. Kate put money in the bank, she put money in the plate at church, she put money in the tin cup of the blind man on the corner of Main Street, she paid her bills, and she cared royally for a family of ten. Ten, because Jim's aged, feeble mother, known generally as "Herself," had come from Ireland some years ago, and was an honored member of the household.

The withered, shawled little old woman had been so terrified at the mere mention of Jim's pay that Kate had, out of sheer charity, softened the blow. Sure, it wasn't twelve pound a week the boy was paid, Kate had hastily amended it—twelve pound a mont' was what she had meant!

Even this had been too much for the aged Mary Ann Oliver, late of County Clare. "It's twelve pound a year they manes," she had been heard to mutter distressedly, "but you cudden't blame the ger'rl that she'd boasth a bit about her man!"

She curled like a little owl in the corner of her son's kitchen, blinking at the raw electric light that dangled in the middle of the room, and "givin' a lep" whenever the telephone rang. She lived on strong tea, sugared and milky, and consumed at strange hours, and left the dooryard only to scuttle the three shabby back blocks to church, and home again.

Her "bades" rattled almost continually in her old claws; she was a miracle of skill with Kate's fat, cross, teething baby. And now and then she spoke.

"There's thim says that all the throuble was in it, was the moon," she observed unexpectedly once, out of a silence. Respectfully pressed, she appeared to be alluding to the Great War. At another time, of Kate's children, she remarked dispassionately, "Thim'd run the streets as fleet as the deer, an' the thrucks bashin' into thim!"

And when Kate, singeing chickens or wringing great baskets of baby linen, returned a cheerful, devout: "God keep the whole of thim!" old Mrs. Oliver clucked several times like a parrot, screwed the wrinkled, leather-colored map of her face into a new design, and said shrilly: "Amin to that, thin!"

Tonight, in answer to Bernadette's question, the old woman suddenly explained fluently:

By Kathleen Norris

A Story of an Irish Husband *who imagined he was* Boss *in his* Home



Illustrations by James Montgomery Flagg

"Diplomacy's war, dear'ry, an' war's diplomacy, an' where you'd get the one you'd get the other, for they're one an' the same thing, God keep all here!"

Bernadette, surprised and gratified at this burst, remained dangling in the gawky attitude of a studying child at the table, her pencil staining her scarlet underlip, her vacuous, expectant gaze upon her grandmother.

"Diplomacy ain't war exactly, is it, Jim?" Kate asked doubtfully. "I'm so ignorant I don't know what is it it is!" she said contentedly, with a laugh.

"Diplomacy is whin they're talkin'," Jim enlightened them easily, "an' war's fightin'."

Kate and Bernadette were satisfactorily impressed with this dictum, and Jim's old mother grumbled in strange, obscure resentiment: "Oh, sure he'll think he's a grand man, from this on, that you all does be said by him!"

"Go on studyin', the whole of you!" Kate directed her idly listening children, suddenly and authoritatively. The little Olivers, shocked from an instant of blissful inertia into horrible consciousness again, writhed extensively, yawned, bit their pencils, and lunged drearily at their work.

THEY wrote staggering figures, smudged them with erasers, tore holes in their papers, lost places in their books. They were all weeping with discouragement and weariness when Kate finally banished them, and sat down in a spotless kitchen, to follow the fortunes of Polly and Her Pals.

"But, Jim, diplomacy's more than war," she remarked suddenly. Jim—God bless him!—was sound asleep, and snoring. "Herself" was stepping about as warily as a lean old cat, brewing tea. There was a bag of bakery rolls in the closet, and she preferred them to Kate's big whole-wheat loaves.

"The little cow an' the chickens wud get that dar'rk male, at home," she would observe dispassionately.

But Kate had a Government Bulletin about feeding children pinned up by the sink, and even "Herself" couldn't persuade her to give the children hot white bread.

"I give it to all of thim, the two I raised, the nine I losht!" old Mrs. Oliver would argue. "Hot p'tato cakes, an' a taste of por'rk, an' their tay—they'd not get the betther of that, go where they might!" she would add, with relish of the memory. "An' they'd have to have a round of hot bread on me, though I'd think to thrick thim, an' bake it afther the lot of thim was in bed. Out they'd all get, wit' the hot butther drippin' on their bare legs—the creatures!

"You've diplomacy on the brain, Kate!" the old woman said tonight, gulping her tea with appreciative gasps, and looking scornfully at her sleeping son. She hated to see Jim with his socks on the opened flap of the oven door, sound asleep. The min folks had it too aisy, she would observe.

"Well, I have!" Kate said, with her wholesome laugh. And she thought that she would ask Bernadette to be sure to have the word defined by her English teacher, Sister Mary Philip, the next day.

However, by morning she forgot all about it. It was Saturday, anyway, and one of those times that Kate simply characterized as "a day," with a significant accent on the last word. There were har'rd days, long days, quee-er days, puzzling days in her full life. And then there were the few that baffled description, and were merely, with eloquent emphasis, described as "days."

When Jim left the house at twenty minutes past six, Kate had been up for an hour, dressing, nursing the baby, packing her man's lunch, cooking his breakfast. The December sky outside of her brightly lighted kitchen had been velvet black and spangled with stars when she awakened, but as Jim drank his coffee, and wolfed his eggs, a strange pallor came over the shabbiness of the back yard, the children's cans and wheels and ropes, the boxed line of yards that led downward, toward the big Dumps. Objects began to show in queer bulky shapes, furred with sooty snow; a milk-wagon drifted from gate to gate through the ruts, never quite stopping, never quite on its way.

"Oh, boo—it's cold!" Kate said, chattering, gasping, as she came in with the milk.

Jim was in a critical mood. "I wish we'd done somethin' about me Cousin Lizzie, Katy. She goes back to Sheecawga, Monda'."

"I know it, dear'r—but Staten Island! An' me wit' this young lady on me hands—— " Kate apologized, looking down at Rose Stella, who was gluttonously eating, with a fat hand beating her mother's ivory breast the while. "Your Cousin Lizzie might as well be in the moon!" said Kate.

"Ye cud of wrote her," Jim suggested.

"I cud indeed," Kate said thoughtfully and repentantly. And she frowned slightly, considering. Presently her eyes lighted. "Here, hold her a bit, Jimmy," she said animatedly, then. And from the drawer of the table she unearthed a lined tablet, a stamped envelop and a bottle of ink. For a moment she scratched busily, in her clear pretty hand—Kate had worked in a telegraph office once. "Read it!" she said grinning, as she handed it to Jim.

But Jim, cuddling his baby, preferred rather to listen. So Kate read aloud in her own fashion the words she had written in fairly good English:

"Monda', December nint'. Dear Lizzie, I have no help now wit' the crowd of thim, an' the baby is very young. She don't thravel well this winthry weather. Besides that his mother is wit' me. But cud you not come up an' spend the night wit' us—anny night this week, an' we wud have a good time, an' maybe

you cud see some of the neighbors that you use to know back awhile whin you lived here."

"Where do you get that Monda' stuff?" Jim demanded flatly, when Kate stopped to eye him significantly.

"Wait!" said his wife. She rubbed the clean envelop into a grimed condition on the table oilcloth, dropped it to the floor, ground it under heel, and folded it thickly in the middle. "Mail that now, Jimmy," said she, with the hint of a grave smile, "an' sure I'll have a note from your Cousin Lizzie apologizin' to me that she'd never let me know she cudden't come an' sayin' that she never got my Monda' letther until today!"

Simple James looked admiring almost to the point of being scandalized at this Machiavellian maneuver. But he took the letter, and scratched his head, and presently went muffled and overcoated and cheered and fed into the still dark morning.

Kate's babies were by this time straggling, damp and cross and yawning, into her warm kitchen. From now until night she would merely perform the duty nearest at hand; she would butter, wipe, wash, sugar, cut, chop, pour shake, scrape, pin, stitch, smooth, lift, rattle and sweep, button and unbutton everything that came to her hand. Her contented, loving voice was never still.

"Aggie, look, dear'r—you got the cup wit' the nick in it! You're the lucky one today, I know that! Well, taste that, it's warm, an' it's not hot—that's the way to have it. Look at me ger'rl that never let a peep out of her. Mama's proud of you, Helen, that you'd let Josie have it! Agree wit' him whin he teases you, dear'ry, that's the way—tell him he's so smart that he knows everythin', of course, an' even Mama an' Papa have to obey him. Ye see, he don't like that anny too good, do ye, Misther Know-all? That's the time Mama an' the ger'rls had the laugh on you in the latther end!

"Mary Marg'ret, you're as good as a woman, you are indeed. But I'll bet Bernadette can keep you busy—can ye wash thim faster than she'd wipe thim, Dette? Come here, dear'r, an' Mama'll whisper ye a secret worth two of his—sure, he has on'y a weeny secret annybody cud have! But I'll tell ye a dandy. Oh, dear'r me, I wish a fairy wud wash Josie an' Helen's faces for me an' put on their rompers an' shoes while I'd be in the bedroom wit' the baby. But sure there's no fairies now, they're all back in Ireland—the creatures. Wudden't I be the surprised woman if I'd come out an' the little ones wud be dressed on me!"

The seven children, and some five or six animals described as "the young cat and his kittens" surged aimlessly about the shabby, smoke- and grease-darkened room that was their winter world—and a world not so far from Heaven as the corporation that rented Kate the house for twenty-two dollars a month might have imagined. There were never ugly words, and almost never tears in Kate Oliver's kitchen; and if it was a place of confusion and racket and disorder, it was a place of love and joy and comfort, too.

This morning, at ten, while Kate was nursing Rose Stella, and Helen and Josie were taking deep, mid-morning naps, her sister Ella came over with the twins. Tim's mother lived with Ella, so she was sometimes free for an hour or two. She was a sandy, red-haired woman, tall and raw-boned like Kate, but with a sad, pale face. Ella had been widowed a few months before; she was given a widow's pension of ninety-four dollars a month, upon which she and her five children, and her aged mother-in-law, existed precariously.

KATE helped to the extent of giving them four or five filling meals every week. Even now, when she gave the sleeping baby to her mother-in-law, and began briskly to make bread puddings, Ella knew well that she would carry one, hot and fragrant, home with her. One day Kate's gift would be a paper of safety-pins, the next a box of baking-powder; no day went by without its counsel, its hospitality, and its gift.

"Manny a day," said Kate artfully to Ella, as she crumbled odd crusts of bread, and scattered dark, damp raisins with a lavish hand, "they'll get into their rubbers an' raincoats wit'out ever a wor'rd to me, mind you, an' be off to the store for me! I'd never have to say a wor'rd to thim——"

Bernadette, Victor and Agnes, at this, began to slide unobtrusively toward the pegs in the kitchen entry that held their thick little bunchy coats and caps. Presently, with smothered bursts of laughter and much pantomime clapping of hands, the sleeping baby always in mind, they were equipped for the street, Kate appearing to be quite overcome with amazement and gratification. She gave Dette a penciled list for the grocer, including in her money outlay five pennies for five large round cakes.

It was pleasant in the kitchen when the children were gone. A rift of clear wintry sunlight crossed the littered porch and lay bright on the scrubbed oilcloth of the table, the stove fire crackled pleasantly, the air was warm, and scented with the baking puddings. Rose Stella and her old grandmother were both asleep; Kate presently engineered the baby into her crib. Her big yellow bowl was washed, the egg-shells and empty raisin box jammed down into the bucket under the sink, the broom drawn for the thousandth—the ten thousandth time—over the worn oily floor.

The kitchen was "done"—it was half past ten o'clock. Kate sank into a chair, her busy knife flying over the chunks of yellow squash that would be pumpkin pies tomorrow.

"Did you go back to the little place you seen Thur'rsda', Ella?"

"Well, I did not, thin. I didn't want to, afther the way he threated me so short."

ELLA'S mournful, resigned voice sank into patient silence. The old woman opened her eyes, sat with her lean little elbow cupped in a lean little hand, her palm under her chin, her bright old eyes studying the two sisters attentively.

"How manny rooms did it have to it, dear'r?"

"Four'r."

"You cud do wit' four'r," Kate mused. She opened the oven. A delicious odor of custard and baking fruit and bread and butter rushed out.

"He'd let me have it, if I didn't have so manny kids," Ella presently said mildly.

Kate gave her a significant glance and nod, and sighed. Landlords were like that. True, the law forbade them to discriminate against children, but they all did it, none the less, and Ella, forlornly house-hunting without Tim's big hand to help her, was beginning to despair of finding a place for herself and her flock.

"Kids cudden't do no hur'rt to that old dump," Kate offered dispassionately.

"They cud not. All they want for it is fourteen a mont'," Ella said. "I cud make it very comfortable, an' it's near the Hall, if I had a chance to check hats an' coats for their parties, an' so on. But just the way he talked the other day broke me hear'rt for me; I doubt will he let me rint it off him!"

"Did ye tell him ye had five?"

"I did not. I told him nothin'."

"If ye cud once get him to take a deposit——" mused Kate. "Or leave three of thim here," she suggested brightly. "We'll pack thim away somewheres, an' thin let thim slip back home afther you're in."

"You'd belave," old Mrs. Oliver interpolated, as Kate's voice sank to a doubtful silence, "you'd belave they never was children thimselves, that they'd turn the yoong things out of the house to perish like the bastes! Sure, what is it to thim how manny children you'd have, an' you payin' the rint ev'ry quarther that was in it?"

"They're all like that," Kate mused despondently. "You cud have the law on thim for it, but sure, you never do," she added.

"Oh, they're very quick-witted, that they'd never let you catch thim," Ella contributed. "They'll never say it's the children—not they. It's always that somebody else is lookin' at the place, an' they don't know will they rint it, an' this an' that, until your hear'rt wud be destroyed on you!"

"Ellen Haley has eleven—the creatures," Kate said. "An' whin the poor soul had to move from the Bronx place she had, sure the lan'lords wud laugh in her face! Didn't she an' Joe Haley rint an old brewery loft last mont', an' run up a few walls of what's-they-call-this brown cardboard stuff? They has eight big rooms, an' all they pay is twinty-eight, an' so they had the luck of it in the latther end! But Ellen says to me, 'It's on'y whin they want your boys to kill, in the wars, that they'd pay the rint or the males for thim! Sure, children's no good to the country at all,' she says, 'the little woolly dogs wud sell higher in the market than a boy or ger'rl wud!' she says."

"God help her for a good soul, it's thrue," said old Mrs. Oliver.

"Stay an' have lunch wit' us, Ella," the sister begged hospitably. "It's Saturda', an' Jimmy'll be home at four'r o'clock, an' glad to have a talk wit' you."

The puddings were cooling now, Kate had wiped big potatoes and put them into the oven, had brought forth a bowl of cold, packed cereal.

"All we're havin' is the potatoes an' the fried mush," she assured the guest. "But later I'll take the little ger'rls an' we'll



¶ *"Katy," said Jim, "don't say annythin' to Vic you'd maybe be sorry for. Why wouldn't we lave all unpleasantness to the Turks an' thim that lives by fightin' an' uproar?"*

walk over an' see the feller about that place—maybe we can talk him over!"

But before the last sirupy plate was scraped she had an inspiration; an inspiration born of Ella's casual remark that her old mother-in-law meant to take the twins and the baby and go to the cemetery tomorrow, to poor Tim's grave.

"I'll tell you what you do!" Kate exclaimed upon this, her fine, thin, intelligent face lighted with one of the mischievous smiles of her girlhood. "While Tim's mother an' the twins is up at the graveyard, you an' me'll go over an' see the lan'lord. An' if he asks you how manny children you've got, show him the two you have wit' you, an' I'll pull a sigh an' say: 'Sure she has five, poor ger'rl, but three of thim's up in the graveyard wit' their poor father!' An' thin you take the place an' pay the deposit, Ella, an' I'll have the twins here for a bit, an' you can kind of wor'rk thim in, one by one, afther you've moved in!"

Ella, her teacup in air, remained transfixed with admiration at this brilliant suggestion, a slow, almost shocked smile spreading itself over her worn face, and old Mrs. Oliver paid her daughter-in-law the tribute of a deep sinister cackle of laughter.

"She cud inthrigue the Pope himself—that one," she commented to Ella, in an admiring aside.

"Well," Ella said finally, relief and new determination in her voice, "that's exactly the way I'll get him—I'll do it! It'll be no lie, either, for I'll see him at just the time they're in the graveyard—I'ave that to me for a good thrick on the old curmudgeon!"

"There was a gombeen-man in the old countra'," Mrs. Oliver was beginning, with alert, ghoulish relish, "an' sure there wasn't one in the parish—maybe savin' the priest himself—who wudden't of been glad that he'd step in a bog-hole! He had a very cute, mean face on him, like a red fox itself, an' he'd folly one that he'd have a down on——"

Interruptions occurred. The cracked old voice rambled on unattended. The little girls came out from their long naps, red-cheeked and blinking and weeping, and had to have their share of fried mush and baked potatoes. The other children, long home from their grocery errand, wanted to go out again; Bernadette and Mary Marg'ret to Aunt Ella's, Victor to "Harry's house." Victor was warned to be home before dark; mufflers, stiff and hot and dry, were taken down from behind the stove, the baby was nursed and went into her high-chair, Ella and her troop set out into the blue, snowy afternoon.

Kate, washing, wiping, buttoning on through the long flying day, reviewed her meals in housewifely fashion. Fish-cakes and bread pudding for supper; Jim loved them. Maybe she'd make muffins. Maybe she'd fry an egg for his special fish-cake. Dried apple sauce. Would Ella stop at the grocery and send her over ten pounds of sugar? "Have (*Continued on page 106*)

By ROBERT



The Bacchante

The Story So Far:

MARTIN DALE was desperately anxious to get just the right actress to take the leading rôle in his forthcoming play at the great Central Theater in London—his first play in a big theater. He refused to accept any of the actresses suggested by the managers, Campion and Grant, and left his final agitated conference promising that he would find someone himself.

It was his friend Mrs. Sartoris who suggested that he try Valentine Morris, then making her first appearance in an obscure theater and an obscure play—"The Leper's Wife"—which was about to fail.

Martin Dale went to see "The Leper's Wife" and knew at once that Valentine Morris was *the* woman for his part of Magdalen Smith. She had that rare combination, brains and magnetism. With Mrs. Sartoris, he went back-stage and bluntly offered her the part—subject to the approval of Campion and Grant.

Valentine Morris had for years been struggling with obscurity and poverty in the "provinces." She was bitterly disappointed that her first London appearance should be in a failure, and was even debating whether to give up the stage. Now came this miraculous opportunity to play before the huge Central Theater audiences.

On first entering the Central Theater, Valentine succeeded by sheer nerve and arrogant personality in dominating even the coarse, hard-shelled Campion, and the equally hard if less coarse Grant. Against adverse circumstances, she compelled them to give her a fair hearing and she was engaged on trial.

Yet, great as was her opportunity, eager as Dale was to have her in the play, for a time he thought she was going to reverse her earlier acceptance. He had read to her the cast of characters, including such famous actors as the distinguished Sir Eden Lisle, Leighton Cole, Mark Trever. When he came to the name of Trever, all Valentine's buoyancy seemed to leave her. She had on first meeting him courageously told Dale that she had a son born out of wedlock. Dale knew at once that Trever, the greatest lover on the English stage, was the child's father. She did not tell him, but he knew.

She was afraid, Valentine confessed, of entering a trap from which she had once escaped. Then be afraid, urged Dale, but act as if you weren't. And with this argument he persuaded her.

Trever was obviously startled at finding her in the cast. But despite his secret opposition, she stayed. One thing that helped her with the management was her friendship with Caroline Geean, an immensely rich and luxurious American woman about whom little was known save that she was a financial backer of plays. Miss Geean, sensing Valentine's great possibilities, had begun to cultivate her.

Then came the question of a contract. Campion and Grant offered her thirty pounds a week for the run of the play. Valentine coolly countered with an offer to work for ten pounds a week for the first ten weeks and one hundred pounds a week thereafter—if she was a success.

She made this offer an ultimatum.

When she had left the office, Campion stormed. He would sign no such preposterous contract with an unknown actress; he had never believed in her ability anyway. But Grant, who did have a curious confidence in Val Morris, said: "Now, Jack, let's talk this thing out. That girl's got the devil in her, and d'you know what that means? It means that she's going to succeed and *knows* it. We've got to keep in with her."

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HICHENS *author of* "The Garden *of* Allah"

A Novel *of a* Woman *with a* Devil *in* Her Soul



¶ *"I was bad in the first three acts," said Valentine. "But in the last act you pulled out great stuff," said Campion. "I'm pretty tough, but you knocked me out."*

Illustrations by
W. Smithson Broadhead

THAT day, after leaving the managers' room, Valentine found Dale anxiously waiting for her at the stage door. The rest of the company had dispersed.

"Oh, you waited! Let's walk, shall we? How dry London feels this September! Brian is by the sea."

"You don't wish you were?"

"Perhaps I shall be almost directly."

"You don't mean that. What's happened?"

"I've given Campion and Grant an ultimatum about my salary. They called me in to sign an agreement."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, on a note of relief.

"But I refused to sign it."

Dale looked at her, and it seemed to her that there was menace in his eyes.

"D'you know," she said, "I believe you are a true artist."

"Why? What makes you say that just now?"

"Because I believe you're an inhuman brute. We've become friends. I dare say you would declare that you were fond of me if——"

"I am fond of you," he interrupted her.

"And directly your play seems to be threatened you become my enemy. I saw menace in your eyes just now. Oh, you don't know how cruel you can look!"

"But you refused to sign!"

"I did. They offered me thirty pounds a week."

"Only thirty!"

"And I offered to take ten."

"Ten? Are you mad?"

"My dear, perhaps I am. There have been times when I thought I was." She lowered her voice. "There will be such times again; and perhaps more dangerous times, when I shall be mad and not think I am."

"But why say you'll take twenty pounds a week less than they offer you?"

"This is why." She explained. Dale looked frankly aghast. "You see the method in my madness?"

"Valentine, you mustn't do this."

"Do what?"

"Wreck my play and your whole future on a miserable question of money." He stopped on the pavement. She had to stop with him—or leave him. "Go back—now. Tell them you'll take thirty pounds a week."

"But I won't take it."

"I'll make it up to you out of my royalties. I'll give you the extra seventy pounds a week. I swear I will. Every treasury night I'll——"

"My dear, I don't want your money. Walk, or we shall have a crowd round us. There are two pairs of silk stockings interested in us already."

"We must take a cab. Here's one!" He thrust up an arm. "Get in. Go to Seven L Tedworth Square. It's a corner house. Now what is all this nonsense? How could you defy Campion and Grant at such a critical moment?"

"But I don't wish to go to Tedworth Square!"

"Do you actually *want* to be put out of the cast?" Dale asked.

"Do I?" Her voice and manner were suddenly changed. She looked at him with eyes that were terribly grave. After a

long pause she said: "Don't ask me such questions. The mixture that is me can't find, perhaps, a quite truthful answer. Wasn't it Pilate who said, 'What is truth?' I say it, too. Don't look so desperate. One must never look desperate in a taxi. A taxi is the wrong setting for desperation."

Dale sat still for a moment.

Presently he said: "What I want to know is whether you are a very determined business woman, or whether you wished to contrive a means of being put out of the cast."

"Well, I think thirty pounds a week for the whole run was a mean offer."

"So do I."

"Then why attack me?"

"I only want to make it a hundred a week and keep you."

She put her left hand on his hand. "You *do* believe in me. It's extraordinary. And I love your carelessness about money."

"And don't you believe in yourself now?"

"Yes. I could give a performance of that part which would astonish London. And do you know why?"

"Because you've got the temperament and the talent to——"

"The real because is this—because I should be acting with Mark Trever."

Her frankness struck him like an unexpected blow. He had known. And she, of course, must have known, did know that he knew. But never a word of that truth had been uttered between them. And he had not expected that it would ever be uttered. Yet now like a stone thrown by her hand it struck him.

"Don't say anything," she added quickly. "But when we get to your house I'll come in."

He obeyed her. He was glad to obey her, for he didn't know what line to take. And he was still afraid, terribly afraid of what she might do.

When they were in his library she took off her hat quickly, as if it had been irritating her, and stretched herself out on his sofa. But she kept her head high on a big cushion.

"No, no, nothing!" she said. "And I won't stay very long. But I think perhaps I owe it to you to tell you—something." And then she was silent.

"Tell me this," he said at last. "Do you think they mean to refuse your conditions?"

"They did refuse them."

"With theater people, refusals, acceptances, all the things that are usually binding, seem to mean very little."

"I know. Don't I know!"

"Well, then—what do you think?"

"I think Campion—perhaps—wants to get rid of me. I think Grant doesn't want to. I'm sure Grant has come to believe in me. And I *know* that Trever is trying all he knows to get me kicked out."

"Trever!"

"Yes, Trever. And I love Trever."

"Oh—Valentine!"

"Yes—that's how it is! You don't like Trever, do you?"

"Not very much."

"Nor do I. But I love him. That's how it is. I thought I had escaped from a trap I was in years and years ago. But you led me back to it, and the teeth have closed on me again. You did it all. You did it—and just by words."

"Words?"



"You think," asked Dale, "Valentine will be happy

"Yes, when you said, 'Then be afraid but act as if you weren't.' Words, just words, can have a tremendous effect on what *I* call the soul. The right words. You found the right words to make me do what you wanted. That was diabolically clever of you. But now——"

"Yes? Now?"

"I couldn't tell even you exactly why I behaved as I did today. But it was as if once more something within me took charge. You remember?"

"Yes."

"At the same time," she said, in a more casual voice, "it was damnably mean of them. Either I'm worth nothing in your play and their theater, or I'm worth more than thirty pounds."

"And if they refuse, you mean to go? You mean to chuck me?"

"I must now. I've given them an ultimatum. So there's no open door, no way out."

"Unless——"

"No. I've got quite a good appetite, but I could never eat my words to a man like Campion."

After a silence he said:

"And which do you wish it to be—an acceptance on their side or a refusal?"

"I don't know. And perhaps I shall never know. But if they accept my conditions, then I promise you I will see this thing through."

"I shall pray tonight," said Dale.

AFTER a long colloquy with Grant, and an even longer one with Sir Eden Lisle, Leighton Cole and again Grant, Campion "climbed down," and within a couple of days of Valentine's confession to Dale she signed an agreement which Campion



in mortgaging the future?" "Oh, yes," said Miss Geean. "She will float comfortably at the edge of abysses."

described as "the most preposterous document I ever put my name to, bar none." When Meyer had flown away with the managers' copy of this unholy deed Campion said to Grant:

"I've had enough of all this. I'll leave you to break it to Trever. He'll be angry, I can tell you."

"He isn't master here."

"No. Seems to me there isn't a master. Seems to me there's a mistress." He thrust his hands far down into the pockets of his immense trousers. "If that woman, Morris, should make a success on the first night, then God help us all; that's all I've got to say. I've seen a few female bullies in my time, but she leaves the lot of them standing at the starting-gate. And without a name to bless herself with! Anonymous, as she calls it! Anonymous, and does us in for a hundred a week! Well, you can tell Trever. I won't."

And he stuck a cigar in his mouth and went off to the Rams' Club to play poker.

That same day Grant mentioned the matter in a very casual way to Mark Trever.

"We've signed with Miss Morris. Couldn't find anyone else and she seems fairly satisfactory. Besides, we got her dirt cheap. We're starting her with ten quid a week. But that's between you and me, my boy—strictly."

"That won't ruin you," said Trever, in a colorless voice.

"You like her all right, don't you?"

Trever shrugged his broad shoulders. He was magnificently made and fascinated a certain class of women by his "build."

"I don't mind her. But she plays down all the time."

Grant stared for a moment with his very intelligent eyes. "She's keeping a lot up her sleeve," he then said, in a very significant voice.

"Think so?" Trever said, as if startled.

"I do. I think she's going to spring a big surprise on you all."

"Well, I hope she doesn't keep it till the first night. I like to know where I am with the woman I'm playing with."

"My boy, you can hold your own very well with anyone."

"Oh, as to that—— You don't tell me she's getting ten quid a week right through the run, do you?"

"That's to be settled presently. She starts at ten quid a week. But don't mention it."

"She won't draw even that to the theater."

"Not the first night, perhaps. But there's other nights besides the first night."

"You all seem gone gaga on the woman."

"If we are, that may mean that a few thousand of the public may go gaga on her too. We aren't all as rocky as you about a seductive woman, Marky. But then you've been spoilt, my lad. They've fallen to you too easily."

"People talk a lot of rot about that."

Grant smiled. "By the way," he said carelessly, "how did she look in 'The Island of Dreams'?"

"Good Lord, that's a century ago! She was a mere kid then and I wasn't much more. Besides, she only walked on. I had nothing to do with her."

"Ah!" said Grant. "An undressed sort of play, wasn't it? I seem to remember."

"Yes, for England. But if you'd been round the Paris shows as I was before I went to America, you wouldn't say so. Why, one girl at the Moulin Rouge was dressed in a diamond. And it wasn't the Kohinoor, either."

Four days before the first night of Dale's play at the Central Theater Campion said in the managers' room:

"I've got the biggest financial interest in this house and I'm

not going to sit down under this sort of thing any longer. I was always against engaging that woman. I never believed in her. Trever's bed-rock right. She lets everyone down, him especially. She's got this mania for what they call 'natural' behavior on the stage. I tell you that woman's going to ruin us and something's got to be done about it before the first night."

"What d'you propose to do?" said Dale. His white face looked worn, ravaged almost, and his dark eyes had a burning in them like the burning of fever.

Campion didn't answer. He was walking about the room. Dale looked at Grant and at Armytage.

"I'm not happy about it," muttered Grant.

"I've done my best," said Armytage. "But she won't fall in with my views—thinks she knows better than I do."

"Perhaps she does," Dale jerked out, in a voice that had suddenly become hoarse under the influence of suppressed emotion. "Perhaps she knows better than all of us. Perhaps she's the step forward people are waiting for. Art must move onward and——"

"Oh, my Lord!" said Campion. "Stop him, someone! What are we going to do, Lez?"

FOR once Grant seemed to be, and to feel, helpless. "Hanged if I know!" he said. After a moment he turned his big head towards Dale. "Are *you* satisfied?" he asked. "Are *you* happy about it? It's your play. I suppose you know how you want it acted."

"That's just where you're wrong," said Dale. "I don't know any longer. All these arguments and disagreements have killed any knowledge I may have had once. I—I scarcely know what the play's about any more."

"That sort of junk doesn't get us much further," said Campion. "What we want to know is whether this woman you forced on us satisfies you now you've got her."

"I don't know. I don't know anything. Sorry!"

"See here, Lez, this has got to stop. Ring the bell, will you?"

"What's that for?" said Dale.

"You'll know in a minute. Meyer!"

"Yes, Mr. Campion?"

"I believe Miss Morris is on the stage, isn't she?"

"I believe so, Mr. Campion."

"Go down and ask her to be good enough to come up here at once."

"Certainly, Mr. Campion."

After an interval which seemed to Dale interminable and during which he felt like one sinking in a mysterious quicksand of misery and impotence, there was a knock at the door and Valentine Morris came in, looking hard and defiant and with repelling eyes.

"Mr. Meyer asked me to come up. Do you want me?"

"Yes," said Grant. "Please take a seat, Miss Morris."

Valentine sat down quickly. "Yes?" she said, looking from man to man, and finally letting her eyes rest on Campion.

"We aren't satisfied with the way the play's going, Miss Morris," he said, in answer to her eyes. "None of us is satisfied."

Dale moved, but she didn't look towards him.

"I suppose you mean you aren't satisfied with *me*, as you send for me."

"That's about it. This play's a woman's play. It's got big parts for three men. But it's a woman's play."

"I know that."

"And it hangs on you."

"I know that, too."

"If you aren't right the whole thing goes phut."

"Quite true."

"And we think you're not near right."

"I didn't say——" began Dale.

But she stopped him. "No. Because you're too chivalrous. But you know as well as I do, and much better than Mr. Campion Mr. Grant and Mr. Armytage, that I haven't been right up till now."

"What? You acknowledge you can't play the part?" said Campion. "And yet you won't take Mr. Armytage's ideas!"

"Oh, I'm quite sure I know better than Mr. Armytage."

"Then why on earth——"

"This is why on earth. You won't let me alone. You won't trust me. You won't believe my ideas are of any value. You won't give me even an inch of free hand. I'm perpetually being pulled up at rehearsal—pulled up, pulled up! I'm *never* allowed to get into my stride. And mind you, I'm not a plater. How can I win a Derby for you if you never stop tugging at my mouth and savaging me? Mr. Armytage has a positive genius for interruption. He ought to sit in the House of Commons."

"If you'll excuse me, Miss Morris——" Armytage began.

"But I decline to excuse you, Mr. Armytage. I know far more about a woman than you do or ever will. And I refuse to play this part as if Magdalen Smith were an epicene man in woman's clothing. I know what she would feel. You don't. I know how she would behave. You don't. I know how she would love, and suffer, and mount through suffering. And you don't. All you know is the positions. And the positions are only the merest groundwork.

"Now what I ask is this. And you'll have to give it me or you'll have one of the biggest failures you've ever had in this theater. I ask you to give me tomorrow—not today, I'm tired today—tomorrow a full rehearsal of the whole play from start to finish, on the understanding that there's no one allowed on the stage except the actors and actresses, that no one comes to my dressing-room between the acts, that I'm not pulled up once—not even once—and that no comment is to be made on my performance until the last word of the play is spoken. Then I'll come up here and listen to anything you may have to say to me or of me.

"Do this and I'll give you Magdalen Smith as I conceive her. That's what I've never done yet. And that's what I never can do till I'm allowed to *feel* her. Oh, how I've been trying to *feel* her through all these weeks—and haven't been allowed! Never! Not once!"

Suddenly she sprang up, walked quickly to the wall of the room close to the door and stood there with her back to them all and her face to it. She bent her head down. Her shoulders moved for an instant convulsively. The four men remained where they were, staring at her. Then Dale, as if irresistibly moved, got up and went towards her, saying:

"Miss Morris—dear Miss Morris——"

She turned round sharply. There were tears on her cheeks. "Don't! Don't!" she said to Dale, spreading out her hands as if to keep him away. She raised her voice. "Now will you do as I ask? This man"—she pointed to Dale, who was still close to her—"has written a very fine play. Will you give him and me a fair chance? Will you?"

An intense sharpness had come into her usually rather soft and dark voice. It had a fierce edge to it. It had suddenly become a voice that would "carry" very far.

She moved away from the wall and walked up to Campion, who was near one of the windows.

"Mr. Campion, you've never believed in me thoroughly, I know. You've always had doubts about me. You've never really wanted to have me in the theater. But here I am, and you've signed an agreement with me for the run of the play. Your policy is surely to get the best you can out of me."

SHE looked into his big face and evidently read the sullen and coarse obstinacy in it, obstinacy of the man accustomed to servility in his little kingdom of the theater and now openly defied. She must have read it, for she said, in a suddenly cold and even dull voice:

"I've made up my mind that either I'll have that rehearsal tomorrow or I'll go out of the cast."

"You can't!" said Campion savagely.

"But I will!"

"You've signed for the run. You're under contract."

"I don't care. I've made up my mind to have justice—or go. Now, do you give me that rehearsal?"

"Give it her, Jack, for heaven's sake give it her, and let's have a drink. Meyer! Meyer!" The thumb was on the bell.

"Mr. Grant?"

"Bring the whisky. That's all right, Miss Morris. Don't bother to stay any longer. The usual time tomorrow, and we'll give you a straight run through on the stage, and no interruptions."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Grant. I am very grateful to you. I will try not to disappoint you."

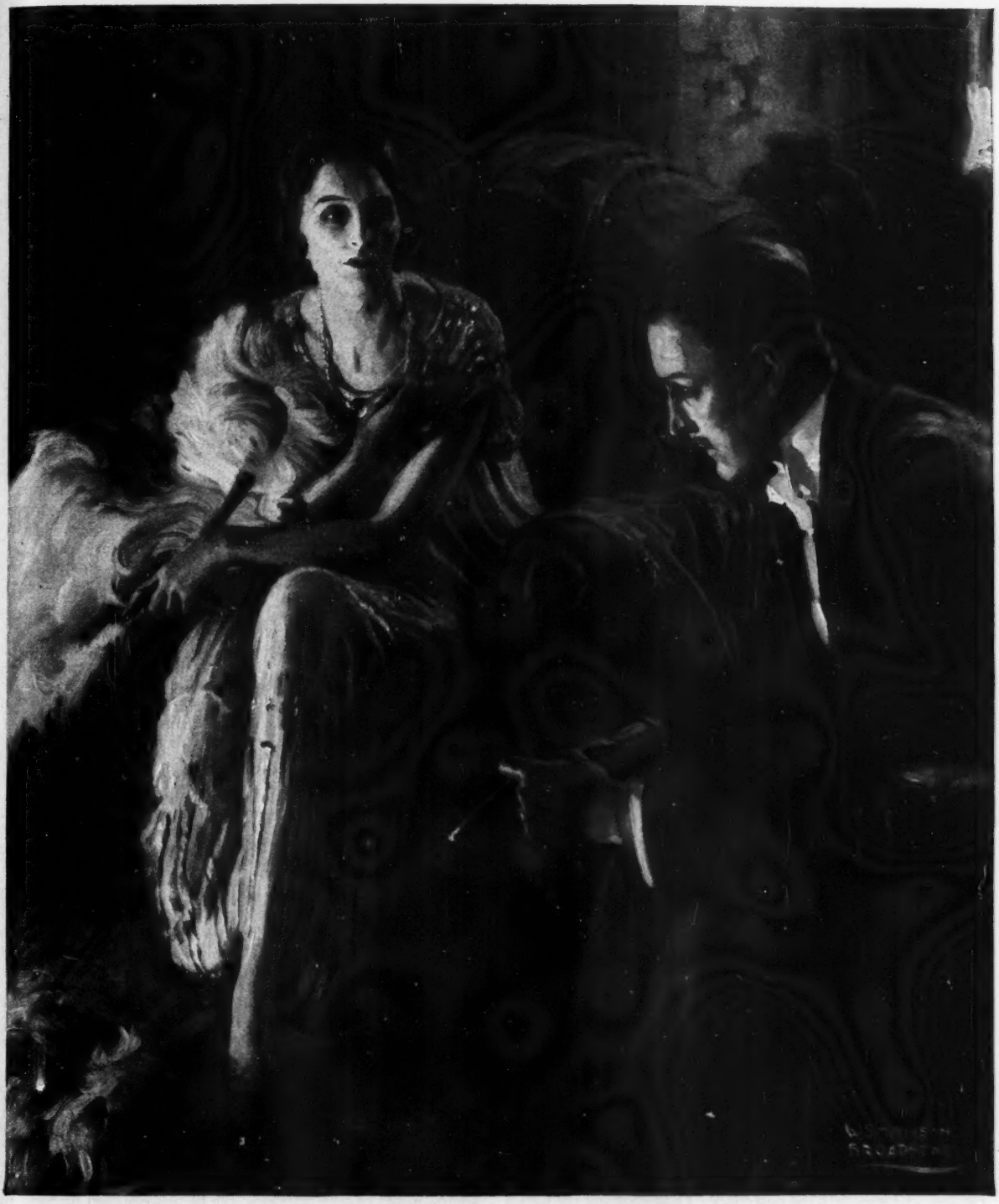
And then she was gone.

Campion's big face was purple. "How dare you, Grant?" he exclaimed, his voice rising almost into a roar. "If you dictate to me I'll break our partnership and take my money away. And I'll do it from one day to another."

Grant got up from his round chair. His dark eyes were shining. "Don't be a fool, Jack. Can't you see? Can't you hear? That girl's cheeky, I'll allow, but she means what she says, and, my boy—what an actress!"

"She was *not* acting!" Dale exclaimed indignantly.

"I don't need you to tell me that. What I mean is that she's



¶ *"A shark is strange," said Valentine. "A human being like Mark is stranger still. He wants to love me again." "Will you let him?" asked Martin. "I don't want to—and I do!"*

got big stuff in her and showed it just now. Jack, we aren't going to be fools. We'll give her what she asks—a straight run through tomorrow. She's got big stuff in her and"—he laid a hand urgently on Campion's great arm—"she's got Carrie Geean for a friend. Don't forget that."

"Carrie Geean! What do we want with Carrie Geean?"

"One never knows when a rich backer will come in useful. Drink up, boys!"

"Is everybody here?" said Grant, on the following morning at eleven o'clock, standing on the large stage of the Central Theater.

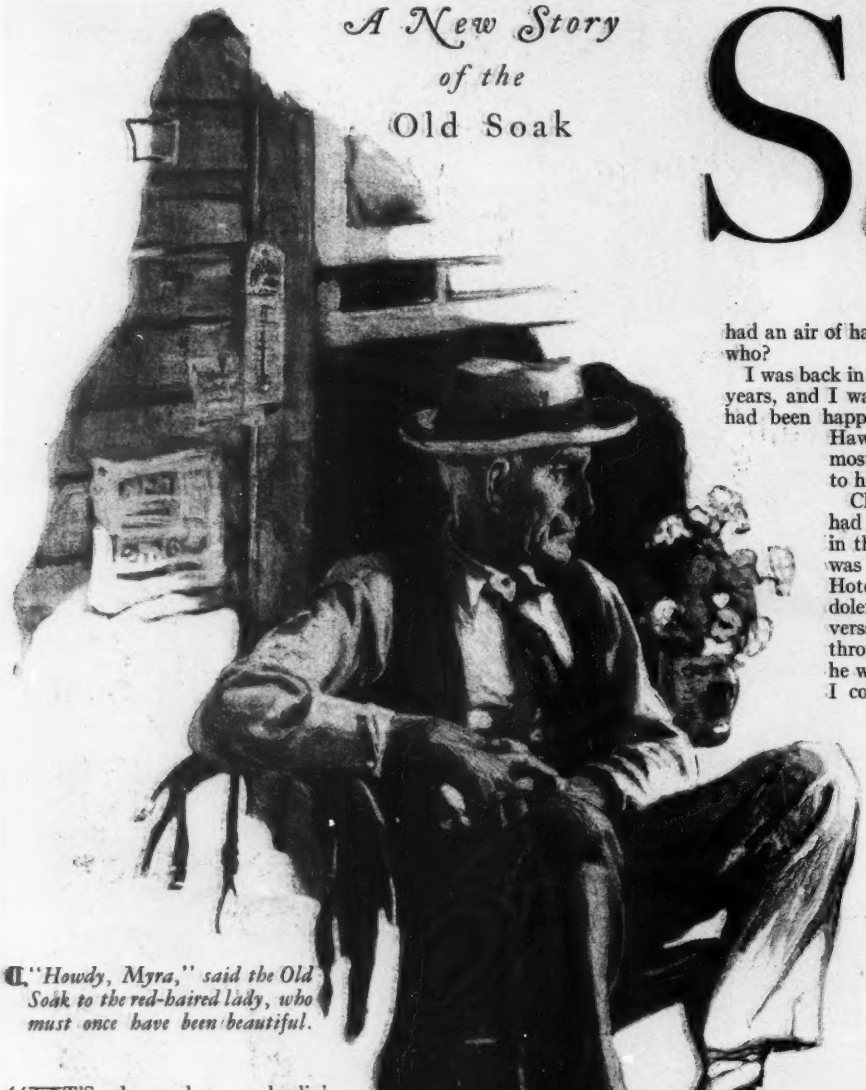
"I think so, Mr. Grant," said Armytage, in a loud, weary voice.

"Very well. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Campion and I are not entirely satisfied with the way this play is shaping, and we want to see exactly what's the matter. We've decided to go right through it this morning from start to finish without interruption. It'll be practically a dress rehearsal without the dresses and make-up. I'm sorry you'll be kept rather late from your lunch, but for the good of the play I'm sure you'll make no difficulty about that. Now, Mr. Armytage, you can go ahead. Curtain up!"

As he walked off the stage he stopped (*Continued on page 172*)

A New Story of the Old Soak

The Second



¶ *"Howdy, Myra," said the Old Soak to the red-haired lady, who must once have been beautiful.*

"IT'S always been a leadin' question to me," said Mr. Clem Hawley, otherwise the Old Soak, staring down the sunshiny street, "as to whether a bullhead is a fish or an animal."

A freckled lad of ten was holding up a string of fish for the inspection of a red-haired woman who had just got out of a coupé. The variety of catfish known as the bullhead largely predominated, and the boy was evidently trying to make a sale.

"If you regard a bullhead as an animal," continued the Old Soak, "you got to ast yourself how the pesky thing can live so long under water without ever stickin' his head up for air."

The red-haired lady somewhat impatiently shook her head at the boy, and went into the post-office. I somehow got the notion that Clem was as much interested in the red-haired woman as he was in the bullheads.

Nevertheless, he would continue to talk of bullheads until he got ready to shift the conversation to the lady.

"And if you regard the bullhead as a fish," said Clem, after a pause, "you got to ast yourself how he can manage to live so long onto dry land without even takin' a drink."

The red-haired woman came out of the post-office with a letter in her hand and a worried look upon her face; she was a woman of about fifty, and she must at one time have been beautiful.

She passed by the front of Smith's Palace Hotel, where Clem and I were sitting in the shade, and into the grocery-store beside it. She nodded to Clem, and he touched the brim of his straw hat with one finger and said: "Howdy, Myra." I did not remember her as anyone I had ever known in the little town where I had passed a part of my boyhood, and I wondered about her. She had an air of having lived in cities. Myra? Myra who?

I was back in the village after an absence of some years, and I was trying to catch up with all that had been happening in the interval. Mr. Clem Hawley knew, and I had already spent most of the month of June listening to him.

Clem, in fact, knew everything that had happened in that neighborhood in the past fifty years. When I left he was sitting in front of Smith's Palace Hotel with his chair tilted back, indolently regarding that part of the universal stream of life which trickled through the village. When I came back he was still sitting in the same position. I could not see that he had changed at all.

Nor were there many changes in the town. The place across the street that had been a livery and feed stable was now a garage, but there was still a game of horseshoes going on in front of it that might have been uninterrupted except for rain, snow, frost, bedtime and the dinner-hour for a quarter of a century.

"All you could say for sure about the bullhead," pursued the Old Soak, "is that he ain't a bird. Leastways, I never seen anyone who ever said he seen one fly. Not even Newt Ackles. Newt used to live over to Ackles's Island, on the edge of the swamp, and about fifteen years ago he made the claim he owned a bullhead that never learned to swim until it was five years old.

"But I never took any stock in that story. All them Ackleses was more or less liars, and they been liars for fifty years that I can testify to personal. The fac's is, that bullhead really learnt to swim afore he was three years old. The Reverend Mr. Hoskins, Newt always called him, after a preacher who used to be here; for Newt was a most unreligious man and awful proud of it. He was always astin' us religious people round about here where was it that Cain got his wife, and when none of us could answer him he would chuckle and look like he was eddyfied by his own enlightenment.

"Lyin' and unreligiousness is only too apt to go together; they are all mingled up inside of a man's elements," said Clem piously, expectorating accurately at a spider on the sidewalk. "I always believed in the Good Book from kiver to kiver, and I always been lucky. And no good ever come of makin' a mock of preachers. Suppose the Reverend Mr. Hoskins *did* have a kind of a big red mouth, with a kind of spiky mustache on top of it, and kind of funny little eyes—was that any excuse for namin' a fish after him, grantin' that a bullhead really *is* a fish?"

The red-haired lady came out of the grocery-store with several packages, and carried them to her car. Having deposited them within it, she disappeared inside Jones' Dry-Goods Emporium. Mr. Hawley watched her in silence, but when he continued he still spoke of Newt Ackles's bullhead.

"Just to show you what a tarnation liar this Newt Ackles

By Don Marquis

Husband



Illustrations by
Forrest C. Crooks

was, he claimed that the way the Reverend Mr. Hoskins met his death was by fallin' into the cistern and drownin' himself when he was six years old—I'm talkin' about the bullhead, y' understand.

"But the way that bullhead *really* met his end was in Hennery Eldridge's blacksmith shop. One chilly October mornin', the Reverend Mr. Hoskins come floppin' into town and a-floppin' down Main Street and he flopped into Hennery's shop and crawled in amongst the warm ashes on the forge to keep from gettin' his tail and fins frost-bitten, and he must 'a' gone to sleep in there. Hennery, he bellowsed the coals up sudden into a flame and cooked the Reverend Mr. Hoskins afore he knew he was in there."

The red-haired lady came out of the dry-goods shop, got into her car and drove down Main Street and round a turn in the road, and so out of sight. Mr. Hawley stared after her.

After a moment's silence I ventured: "Myra who, Clem?"

"Ackles," he said.

"Newt's wife?"

"No, Lem's." And he fell into silence again.

Finally I said: "And is Lem an unbeliever, too?"

"Nobody," murmured Clem, "has ever quite been able to figure out what Lem is." And then: "Speakin' of fish, as we was, one of Newt Ackles's great argyments with me used to be about Jonah and the whale—which the Good Book expressly states as it wasn't a whale at all, but a Great Fish Prepared.

" 'Do you believe that, Clem?' he used to say to me.

" 'In course I do,' I would tell him. There ain't any credit in believin' stuff that's easy to believe. Anybody can believe that. But stuff that's hard to believe takes a real born believer to believe it. And I always been that way. The hard parts of the Good Book is the ones that I believes most firm and most joyous.

"In my own lifetime I been up against a good deal of this unbelief—there's people around this very town has pertended they couldn't swaller some of my own tales; tales of things I seen happen with my own eyes. And so it ain't any more'n polite in me to believe all that other believers tells us or sets down in print in places like the Good Book. What I draw the line at is believin' the stories of the unreligious, like this Newt Ackles."

Again he lapsed into silence, but I knew now that he would work himself around to the red-haired lady in his own way if I gave him time, and I was content to wait.

"One of the Good Book stories always interested me a good deal," he went on presently, "was the story of King David and the E-wee Lamb. One day King David was settin' on top of his palace roof a-strummin' of his golden harp and makin' up a new psalm when he seen a right presentable-lookin' lady getting ready to take her regular Saturday all-over in the back-yard of one of the houses next door. There was grape-vines and lilac bushes all around, and she maybe figured she couldn't be seen by none of the neighbors. And she couldn't have been neither, if the King hadn't been spyin' down at her from his roof. For all I know, maybe she figured on havin' the King see her. Anyhow, he seen her, and it gave him such a start he plucked the G-string on his harp plumb in two, and he says to the courtyeer with him:

" 'You tell that lovely-lookin' widow there to slip something on, for the sake of argyment, and come over here. I want to speak to her.'

" 'Widow,' says the courtyeer. 'That's Captain Uriah's wife.'

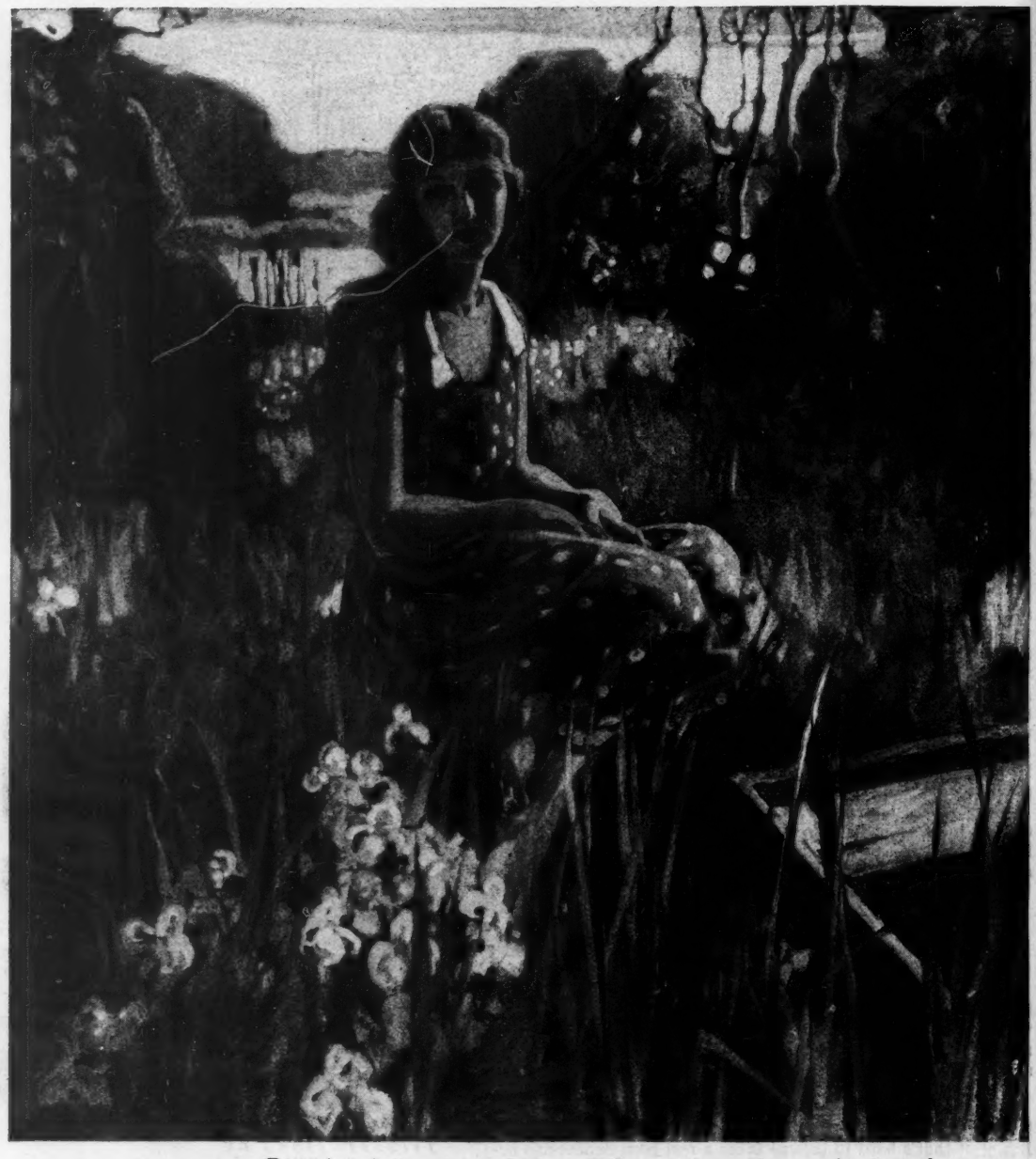
" 'I'll bet she's goin' to be a widow before long,' says the King, 'even if she ain't now.' And it come about even as the King prophesied. And a kind of a low-down trick it was, too. The King ordered that Captain Uriah be put into the forefront of the next battle, and when the news come a few days later that Uriah had been killed David married her. Later, his conscience begun to sting him like a serpent and bite him like an adder, as the Good Book puts it; for the word spread sly and secret throughout the Children of Israel what the King had done. There wasn't any open talk for a while, because he was King, but the priests and the prophets begun to look at him out of the corners of their eyes when he passed the plate or led the singin' in church.

"And finally one old long-haired he-prophet got up his nerve to march into the palace one day and say to him:

" 'Your Majesty, I want justice on a case that has come up.'

" 'Whatever it is,' says the King, 'justice is what you will get. What's the case?'

" 'Well, it's like this,' says the prophet. 'There is a rich man in my part of the country who has everything he wants, and always has had—flocks and herds, cattle and camels and sheep and



¶ *"Nobody had never noticed Myra till Pete seen her. He was a hired man but it was a*

goats, and acres and acres of pastureland; and right next to him lives a poor renter who's sort of down on his luck, and the only valuable live stock he had was one E-wee Lamb. But he thought a heap of that lamb, all the more so because it was his sole and singular possession; he plumb doted on it, and looked forward to the day when it would be the mother of a large and prosperous family. That lamb was just like one of his own kids; he fed it out of his own cup, and it cuddled up nights onto the foot of his bed. It was the fattest and slickest-lookin' lamb in our part of the country, and begun to be known and noted for miles around.

"'We'll say for the sake of argyment that the rich man and the poor renter lived on farms that jined. One day the rich man had company, and got a big feast ready—and what does he do but have his hired man just calmly reach over into his neighbor's pasture and take that E-wee Lamb and kill her and turn her over to the women to cook for dinner. Now then, your Majesty, what ought to be done about it?'

"King David, he was so mad he rared right up on his throne and he says: 'The man that done that shall die.'

"'Well, your Majesty,' says the prophet, 'you're him! The E-wee Lamb is Uriah's wife, and you are the rich man that did the stealin'.'

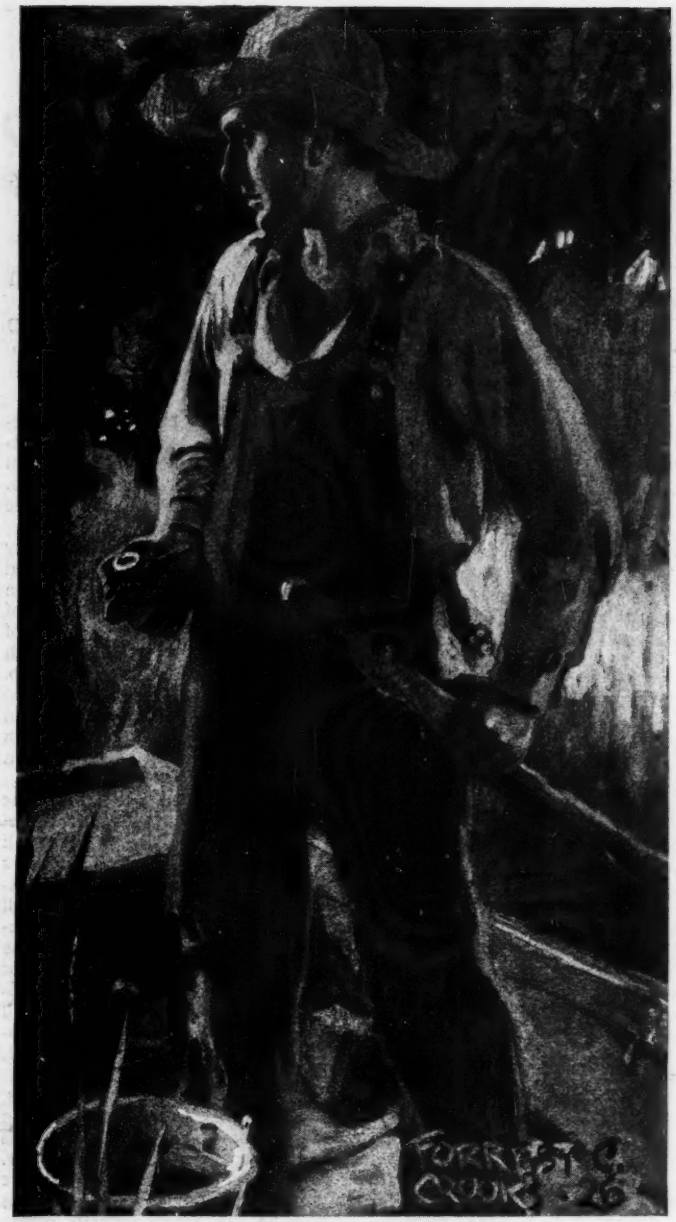
"It struck the King all of a heap, and his conscience stung him more and more, and if you want the rest of the story you can go and look it up for yourself in the Good Book."

Mr. Hawley had apparently dismissed the subject. He took another chew of plug tobacco and masticated it thoughtfully.

But I knew now that he would finish, and I dared to inquire: "Who was Uriah, Clem?"

"Pete Henderson," he replied. "More'n likely you never knew Pete Henderson. He wasn't ever anything but a hired man, and he went to his reward, whatever his reward might 'a' been, more than twenty years ago. People in general forgets hired hands pretty quick. But I don't forget anything nor anybody. And Myra ain't forgot him; and Lem Ackles won't neither, not till the judgment-day sets 'em face to face, and the sheeps and the goats is separated from each other—the sheeps and the goats and the E-wee Lambs. If you could find some way of makin' Lem Ackles forget that Pete Henderson ever lived, I bet you Lem would give you two hundred acres of dreened swamp-land that raises the best crops in the world. And Myra, his wife, would sign her name onto the deed with rejoicefulness in her heart.

"Pete Henderson married Myra when she was a girl of twenty-five. That was old for marryin' in those days, in these parts, for a girl; but nobody had never noticed Myra much till Pete seen her one day over in the middle of the swamp, when there was a



kind of a promotion to her, a swamp angel, to marry anybody."

swamp. He was a hired man, and she was a swamp angel, one of that Siples tribe, and it was a kind of a promotion to a swamp angel to marry anybody. You remember what them swamp angels used to be when you was a kid, and what the swamp was."

And indeed I remembered it well; I had spent part of my boyhood hunting and fishing in it, and exploring it on foot and in boats. It had been an extensive affair, in its great days. Really a lake at flooded seasons of the year, with wooded islands of greater or less extent sticking out of it here and there; it was broken up during the dry seasons into a series of smaller swamps and sloughs, traversed by sluggish creeks, threaded by tortuous roads. And in the middle of it, clinging to the islands and the strips and ridges of higher ground, there lived a peculiar and primitive people, who existed by hunting and fishing and a little agriculture.

The land all about and up to the edge of the swamp had for scores of years been covered with more or less prosperous farms; but the swamp itself was still a wilderness in the midst of a tamed and cultivated land, the last refuge of the mysterious and the picturesque and the grotesque still resisting with a ragged valiance the prosperous and the commonplace.

There were a score of families scattered about in huts and cabins who had a general resemblance to the people who were known as "poor white trash" in Southern communities, and they neither read anything nor traveled anywhere; they were as effectually defended from contact with civilization and ideas as if they had lived upon an island in the sea or dwelt in some forgotten hollow of a great mountain range. These were known as the swamp angels, and in the country round about they were marked and known and noted and looked upon askance.

"Myra was a pretty girl, or she would 'a' been if she'd been washed up some and had anything to wear. I can remember her walkin' in to town here barefooted, when she was a kid, with the mud dried onto her feet and legs, and the town kids starin' at her in that unkind way kids have for anyone they think's peculiar, and jeerin'. And her holdin' her red head high, and not lettin' herself bawl; for what she would 'a' like to done would 'a' been to play with 'em and get sociable.

"I talked to her oncet, and she told me she'd come to town because she wanted to see the stage start out from the post-office with the mail over to the railroad at the county-seat—she'd heard about letters bein' wrote to folks and answered back again, and it seemed just plumb wonderful and incredulous to her, and she wished she could write so she could write a letter to someone and get one back, and anyhow she just wanted to see a letter.

"She learned herself to read off of free almanacs she picked up here in Doc Watson's drug-store. She could 'a' walked the few miles into town here to school, but she didn't have any fit clothes to go to school in, she told me, and anyhow she didn't want people in general to find out that as big a kid as she was couldn't read and write.

"Pete Henderson wasn't ambitious, or he never would 'a' married a swamp angel. Lots of hired hands turns into renters, and after a while gets their own farms, but Pete would probably never have been anything but a hired hand, even with Myra to push him along, if he'd lived his life out—which he didn't. It wasn't remarkable that Myra went and married herself to Pete. She wanted to get out of that swamp, and away from them swamp angels, and Pete was a way out.

"Pete went to work for Lem Ackles after him and Myra had been married a couple of years, and Myra went along and did the housework. And the story is some different from the Bible story, because the Good Book tells you just exactly what happened between King David and Mrs. Uriah, from the first minute that old harp-playin' peetryarch set eyes onto the lady, but it stands to reason that with the Ackleses and the Hendersons there ain't any record of just exactly what happened. Maybe Myra and Lem Ackles fell into love with each other at first sight, and maybe they didn't. Lem ain't so awful much to look at now, but in those days he wasn't terrible unsightly, for an Ackles. And probably him and Myra just went round kind of lookin' at each other, and dodgin' each other and not tellin' each other they was in love for months and months.

"I got a kind of a notion that Pete Henderson found it out himself before either Myra or Lem quite knew it. One Saturday afternoon Pete Henderson and me was settin' into the back office of the Palace Hotel here samplin' some of a fresh keg of beer that Jake Smith had just got in, and we seen Myra and Lem go by the door. There was a look onto their faces as they talked together that they didn't know was there, or they wouldn't 'a' let it show.

"You know me. I ain't any meddler, nor never have been. If fac's comes and pokes themselves into my way, I'm compelled to take some notice of 'em. But I never say anything about 'em. I ain't any gossip, nor I never was. I wouldn't poke into anybody else's business for worlds. Of course, seein' what I seen onto those two faces, I was naturally wonderin' how much Pete himself seen and knew. But I was tactful. All I said to him was:

" 'Is your wife and Lem makin' up to each other, Pete?'

"Pete, he didn't have any call to get het up over a little question like that, if there wasn't anything in it; but the impolite way he answered showed me there must be something in it, for he said: 'You mind your own

(*Continued on page 112*)



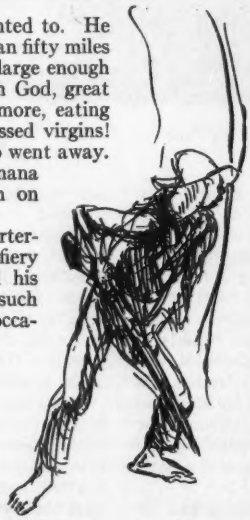
A Simple

An Ordinary Human Mosquito

TITO DIAZ was a banana cutter in the country behind Cape Gracias a Dios, on the Mosquito Coast. Like most of the people on that coast, he was a mixture of all the racial strains available. His mother had been a yellowish woman from somewhere near Rio Grande, and his father was most likely a Mosquito Gulf Indian, for Tito had the typical build of those hardy boatmen—a bullet head set into great square shoulders, a chest like a barrel, long arms, a thick, long body, and sturdy legs.

Tito could not read or write, and had never wanted to. He had never had on a pair of shoes, or traveled more than fifty miles from the place where he was born. When he grew large enough to swing a machete, his mother told him to go with God, great stomach that he was, and not to come back any more, eating everything on the place, name of ten thousand blessed virgins! She pointed her remarks with a large stick, and Tito went away. He went up the nearest river to the nearest banana plantation, and an uncritical *contratista* took him on as a cutter, at about one-tenth the usual wage.

At the age of twenty, Tito could clear his quarter-hectare of bananas in a day, drink as much of the fiery *casusa* on feast-days as the next man, and hold his own in the savage fights that always terminated such functions. *Casusa* is native rum, distilled for occasions by the *mozos*, and taken in quantities as soon as it is cool enough to swallow; then the celebrants carve each other up with machetes. Otherwise, Tito grew into a grave, even-tempered *mozo*, with nothing against any person and no thought beyond breakfast tomorrow. The year of the Sarmiento Revolution found him working for the third season in the cuttings of the *contratista* Coto Fernandez by the Mawa River, that runs down to Puerto Cabesa, where the fruit boats come.



This Coto Fernandez was a superior man. His left hand was off at the wrist—Coto means "lamed"—since the day that a coral snake struck him as he reached for a stem of bananas, in a *seccion* more than half an hour's trot from the camp. There are many of these little red-and-black-banded devils among the bananas and every camp keeps approved remedies for their bite; but you must get your treatment very quickly after being bitten—you should have it in seconds, for the best results. Ten minutes is too long to wait; you die, inside half an hour, most unpleasantly.

Coto Fernandez considered these things briefly while the color and the shape of his hand altered under his eyes; then he laid that hand across a log and cut it off at the wrist with one blow of his heavy machete. He daubed a handful of black mud on the spouting stump, tied it up with strips from his trousers, and walked composedly to the camp. From the company hospital the tale spread, and they made Coto Fernandez a *capataz*, a foreman; and then, because his head worked as dependably under routine conditions as it did in emergencies, he became a *contratista* himself, with a cutting of a hundred hectares in his charge.

Coto Fernandez' camp was on the high northern bank of the river, where a little creek came in. The company erected for him a long shed, with a splendid roof of corrugated iron, and a small room partitioned off at one end. In this room Coto Fernandez lived with his woman, and the *mozos* slung their hammocks outside, down the length of the shed. The woman cooked for all hands—from fifteen to twenty men—and presented the *contratista* with babies at regular intervals. Such unions are the custom of the country, and are usually permanent; sooner or later, in a prosperous season, Coto Fernandez would take his family down to the priest at Puerto Cabesa, and the *padre* would marry the couple and baptize all the children. It was here, observing the elegance and order of the Fernandez establishment, that Tito first felt the stirrings of ambition.

Forethought, in a native of the banana lands, where there is no stress of climate and sustaining food can be plucked from the trees twelve months out of twelve, is rare enough to set a man apart. Your *mozo's* earthly possessions are seldom more than the shirt and trousers he wears, and his machete. These he can move without undue exertion, and he drifts up and down the country, along the rivers, as inconsequentially as the monkeys and the parrots move. A hand who will stay in one place for more than two seasons is sure of preferment.

Tito noted the esteem in which the American manager held Coto Fernandez, when his little power boat dropped in from time to time on inspections, and Tito saw himself, first, a *capataz*, and then a *contratista*, the friend of *gringo* managers, with a house and a woman of his own. And especially Tito saw Rosalita, who was Coto Fernandez' oldest girl, budded all at once from a brat into a slim, gold-tinted woman, with her dark crinkly hair gathered low on her nape, and her dark eyes that gave Tito odd sensations in the pit of his stomach. Certainly he was going to stay.

There was on the cutting of Coto Fernandez another man who saw eye to eye with Tito in this matter of staying—the tall black *capataz*, Juan. After working together for three seasons, they made together the discovery that Rosalita was growing up and worthy of a man's time. Soon after that, Tito found a coral-snake in his hammock; but Tito moved faster than most men. Again, his hammock lashings broke under him one night, and he very nearly impaled himself on a razor-sharp

Soul

Drama *on the* Coast

By *Capt.* John W. Thomason, Jr.

Illustrations by The Author—*made on the field during the actual fighting in Nicaragua*



machete, propped cunningly—extremely odd that new grass lashings should unravel so—odd about the machete, too . . .

Tito thought it over, saying nothing. But Holy Week, when no man works, followed after that, and on the last day of the *fiesta* Tito and Juan settled the affair between themselves, with their machetes, in the swamp on the creek that came down through the *bananales*.

When their argument was finished, black Juan's slashed chest ceased to heave, after some minutes, and he lay in an unsightly huddle among the stained and trampled grasses of the swamp. Tito wiped the blood out of his eyes and was aware that Rosalita stood at his shoulder, panting a little, as if she had been running.

"*Ayi—pobrecito!*" she said presently, and devised something for Juan's last effort, which was a gash that ran from Tito's hair to the angle of the jaw, deep as the bone. And it was she, a practical person, who indicated with a little gesture the long blunt head of an alligator, risen without a ripple in the creek below them. "*Caiman,*" she breathed. Together they heaved at the heavy carrion of the late *capataz* and with much effort, because Tito was dizzy and weak, they slid it into the dark water for *caiman*, who tells no tales on any man . . .

The pair of them turned up at Coto Fernandez' cutting three days later, making no remarks. Rosalita's mother, fat and shrill, found much to say. But Coto Fernandez said that the little one was old enough to set up for herself, and Tito was a steady fellow, as these *mozos* went. He added that Tito might as well be *capataz* until black Juan returned from wherever he had gone—the rascal, notoriously addicted to drink, was doubtless sleeping it off in a *calabozo* somewhere.

He looked at Tito's gashed head, and he decided, privately, that it would be a long time before Juan came back. But he asked no questions, for he was a sensible man. Instead, he helped Tito to set up a little thatched shack on the river bank, and showed him how to make a luxurious bedstead, of straight springy poles and woven strips of cane. And Tito settled down to be a solid citizen.

THE months slid past like driftwood on the river. Young parrots that were in the egg when Tito and Rosalita confided Black Juan to *caiman*, up the creek, were now strong on the wing, and exercised with their screaming elders of evenings over the stream, when the *mozos* came in from the cuttings and waited for the rice to boil. There was an even chance that Rosalita's baby would be a boy, and Tito was increasingly pleased with himself. He was, he considered, fortunate beyond all *mozos;* this Rosalita was a superior woman, with spirit in her. Already she was wanting a pair of shoes from the Chinaman's store down the river, and she kept after him about going to the priest—they could do that when the big rains started, and a man might spare the time. Indeed, the chances are that she would have driven Tito Diaz up in the world; their children might have gone shod and read newspapers. And meantime, in the north, the President-General Sarmiento, exiled for cause by his political opponents in the capital across the mountains, took refuge in a neighboring republic, and fomented war.

A revolution in the banana countries is a curious weaving. In the background there are large business interests that want something and are willing to pay for it. There must be a conspicuous man with a grievance, whose name is a rallying-point for all the little *politicos* without government jobs. There may be a few patriots. To these come a drift of restless chaps, out-at-elbows fishers in troubled waters; and there is added a sprinkling of plain fools with illusions about adventure.

Arms and ammunition sift in from unknown sources; rifles of honest arsenals—St. Étienne, Spandau, Remington—are broken out of packing-cases stenciled "farming implements." Field guns with worn rifling and rusty training-gear, that perhaps fired their last rounds across the wooded reaches of the Argonne, are set up under palm-trees. It remains only to recruit the rank and file, the common soldiers. One simply goes out and gets them, but since they are deplorably intent on their own small affairs, and quite indifferent to governments, recruiting officers have to be persuasive.

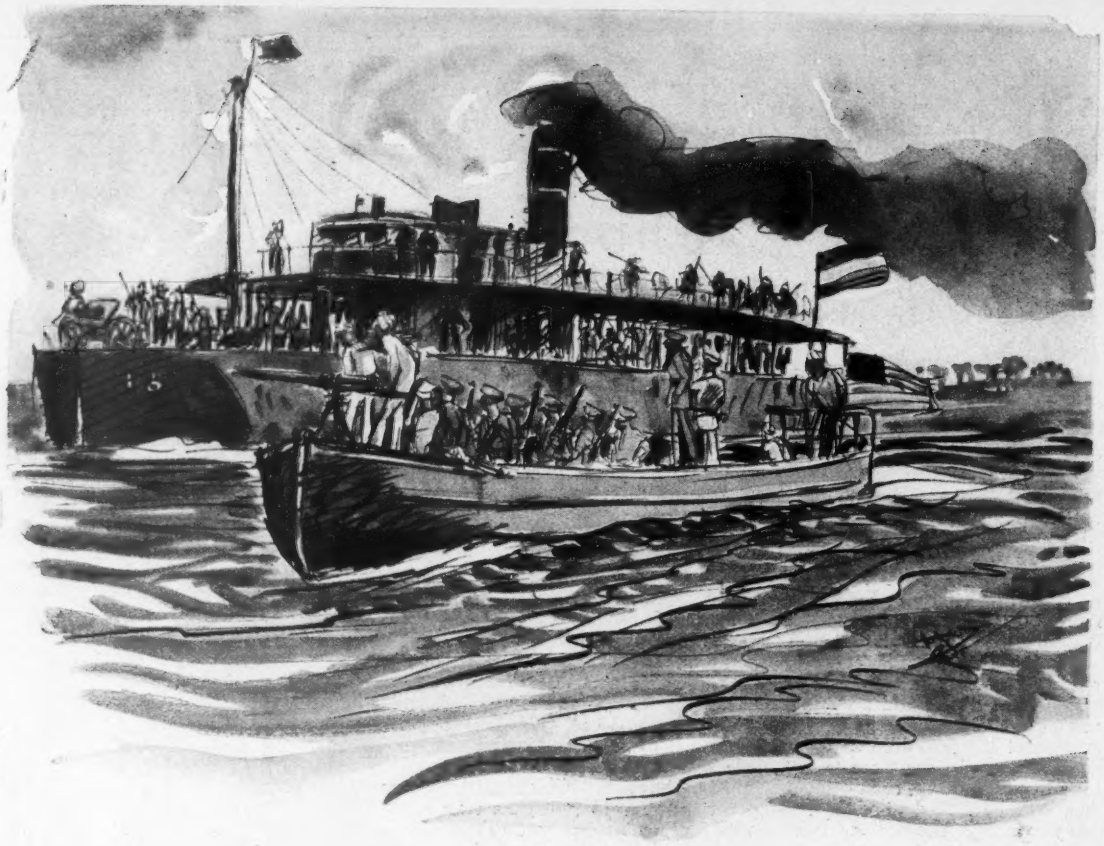
About sundown one evening, the Sarmiento War involved Tito.

A river tug came noisily down-stream, towing a barge, but instead of ye'low-green banana stems it carried armed men, who landed from it. Simultaneously, armed men approached the camp along the trails that led through the banana *secciones*. Coto Fernandez, his *capataz* and all his *mozos* were assembled. A fat man who wore khaki breeches and a large pistol mounted on a box and made oration.

He said he was a colonel, and he read from a paper how the President-General Eustacio Leopoldo Sarmiento B, in exile on a foreign strand, had heard with bleeding heart the outcries of his unhappy people, ground beneath the wicked heels of those vipers and wolves of the Federal Faction.

The President-General was not so base as to sit at ease while the fatherland perished. In swift response to the piteous appeals of his people, whom he regarded as his very children, he was returning. Let traitors tremble! Let the tyrant and the oppressor crawl into holes and pull the holes after them! Armies, patriot armies, avenging armies, would spring from earth in arms where he, Sarmiento, trod! The valiant manhood of such a nation would never endure slavery: he, Sarmiento, would lead them up out of bondage. The miserable minions of the unspeakable Federals would flee at the sight of his patriot legions, armed with right and justice. A few victories, and the soldiers of liberty would return to their homes, loaded with gold and honors, to relate to their admiring families the glories of their achievements, and to rejoice in freedom and prosperity evermore! And more to the same effect.

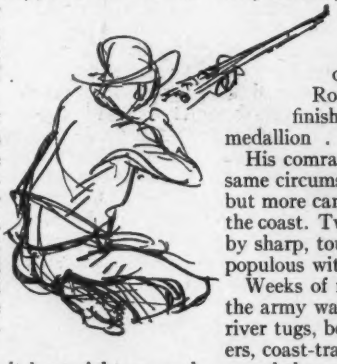




All of this meant absolutely nothing to Tito. He regarded himself as very well-off where he was. He had never heard of Sarmiento; and nobody was oppressing him, that he knew of. He wasn't mad at the Federal Faction, whatever that might be. Furthermore, he had few enough men—couldn't spare any of them, with the bananas ripening faster than usual, and the rains starting so early. Being *capataz*, he said as much.

The Colonel told him that it made no difference. He and his *mozos* could volunteer for service with the so-glorious soldiers of liberty like patriots, or they would be shot—he really didn't have time to hang anybody. He indicated that they were to get aboard the barge—quick! He himself relieved Tito of his long machete. That one-handed fellow was no good—but all the rest—old Pepe, who was gray-bearded, and young Pancho, who was hardly as long as a rifle—aboard the barge, you!

Rosalita's mother set up a very great outcry, but Rosalita was silent. Only, she took the thin silver *escudito* of her name-saint from her neck and hung it around Tito's brown throat . . . Her eyes were big with fear and pain: women have perhaps an instinct . . . Tito whispered to her, "*Oja, Chica*—never mind. I will get away from these fools when they stop—I will be back in the morning, and we will hide until this foolishness is finished." But she covered her mouth with her *rebozo*. One prodded him with a bayonet, and another put the butt of a rifle in the small of his back and pushed; they were fifty men with guns; and Tito went with his *mozos* aboard the barge. The wails of Rosalita's mother followed them down the darkening river.



The barge did not tie up for the night; it kept right on, and one might not drop overboard and swim, for there were alligators. In the morning they passed into the lagoon below, and in the heat of the day they landed on an island, off the mainland, where there were several hundred frowzy fellows and a miscellaneous collection of boats. An important yellow negro wrote their names in a book, and one thrust a rifle into Tito's hand and ordered him to come and learn to shoot. With others he lay on his stomach in the sand and fired ten rounds at the ribs of an old wreck off the beach, having been taught how to work the clumsy, fool-proof Russian rifle.

Broad red ribbons were distributed; you wore them as hatbands, for they were the color of the Sarmiento party, and also its uniform. One gathered that the Federals wore blue. The noise of the shooting pleased Tito, and red was a color he greatly admired.

But they gave you the slimmest ration of rice and plantains, which the men boiled over little driftwood fires, and Tito thought sadly of Rosalita's cooking-pots, and he thought of Rosalita, and Rosalita's small lemon-tinted heels pattering on the hard dirt floor under his thatch, and he thought of his banana cuttings, over-ripe, and he felt very low inside.

The more he saw of this affair, the less he liked it. All foolishness, especially the drill—making a hundred men stand in a line, and face this way and that way for an angry little man who never seemed to want the same thing two minutes at a time! Further, they batted you about with the flat of a machete.

Tito was resolved to run away at the first opportunity. Some dark night he would get a boat, and once on the mainland, he could slip out of sight like a parrot in a mango-tree! He would take Rosalita and live in the bush until this madness was finished. So he thought, fingering Rosalita's thin silver medallion . . .

His comrades in arms, most of whom were present under the same circumstances as he was, felt much the same way about it; but more came in every day, for Sarmiento was doing well along the coast. Two things held them together: the boats were guarded by sharp, tough *bravos* from the coast towns, and the water was populous with large brown sharks.

Weeks of monotonous wretchedness went by; then, in a day, the army was embarked on all the boats and barges available—river tugs, borrowed from the fruit companies, auxiliary schooners, coast-trade vessels with rusty plates, sailing boats, anything—and they went for a day and a night to the southward.

This distressed Tito, for he now had no idea where he was, and it would be a long trail back to Rosalita. They steered in to a straight white beach, backed by a line of low green jungle, out of which a few tall palms lifted. A mile or so south, down the beach, the land raised into a rough, wooded hill, with water on three sides of it. One said that the Federal armies had taken refuge on this hill; presently Sarmiento would fight them there and end the war! The name of the place was so-and-so—it was strange to Tito, and he promptly forgot it.

He could see, even at a distance, that bananas would not do

well on such soil, and there would be no mahogany, either.

But this day Tito's company had scant time to look around; they were put to work unloading the boats and carrying all sorts of stores—ammunition, sacks of rice and beans, stems of plantains—across the beach to the shelter of the bushes.

They got a field-gun ashore, and they sweated under an enormous crate which contained a light tractor, impressed from wharves of the very fruit company that Tito worked for—he recognized the sign of the company. Under the direction of an Englishman who said he knew about such things, Sarmiento's people had built a framework on this tractor, and housed it with plates of iron. Inside, a machine gun was mounted. They had also a drunken American beach-comber who said he could run it, and a German who claimed to be a machine-gunner; and Sarmiento expected great things of his tank.

WHEN they had it safe ashore, the Britisher, the American, and the German got very drunk by way of celebrating, and remained that way as long as their liquor lasted, which was a week. During this week, the Sarmiento army marked time, for they counted heavily on the tank in their attack, and nobody else could make it go.

It was a very dull week for Tito. The Federals on the hill did a little firing, and the *Sarmientistas* fired a great deal from the beach, but it was long-range shooting, and very few were hit. When merchant steamers came in from sea and anchored off the hill, out of range, Sarmiento sent out tugs with armed men to search the steamers, on the chance of picking up something; but small boats full of Marines came from the North American cruiser that was lying off there, and kept them from taking any of the elegant things that were said to be on those steamers.

Tito, whose company was detailed for several of these trips, had hoped to find something for Rosalita in this way—a new *rebozo*, maybe, or a pair of shoes; she had always wanted a pair of shoes—and he felt resentful against the North Americans. About this time the last of the tank-crew's Scotch was finished, and they became sober, and were angry enough for any kind of fighting.

One morning Tito's company was awakened very early. Their officers came among them, kicking and striking with the flats of their machetes. Up you come, you *perezosos!* Shake a hoof, you cat-whiskered *cabrones!* Attention, you! Get in line, you! It appeared that they were going to have this fight. Tito was very glad. He hoped that the fight would settle it so that he could go back where he came from, and he would have seen something of the world, too.

He listened attentively to what the officer was saying:

The cowardly Federals have strung barbed wire across the beach, in front of the hill. The tank—that turtle-looking thing yonder, cares nothing for barbed wire—it is to go right through; then the company is to run through behind it, and all the rascals on the hill will be driven into the sea. That is not all! The big tug, out there, has two hundred men aboard her, and guns like a *gringo* cruiser! She will start at the same time, and while the foolish Federals are watching the tank, those brave fellows will land from the tug on the seaward face of the hill, and catch them in the seat of the pants! Here is a bandoleer of ammunition for every man, and a drink of rum—a double drink!

Offshore, they heard the tug getting under way. The tank made a terrific noise inside itself and lurched off down the beach. Its crew had already drawn their rum ration.

With the fiery native stuff burning their bellies, Tito's company started bravely enough. They strung out behind the tank in an irregular column. Behind them, other companies straggled from the brush and formed. And in the brush somewhere, the field-gun began to shoot. Seaward, the tug began to shoot. These made very noble noises, and Tito felt pleasantly excited. A fine tale to tell old Coto Fernandez . . . and the son Rosalita expected . . . maybe . . . The people on the hill did no firing; perhaps they had run away. The light grew, over the sea on your left hand, as you went along; when the tank came to the barbed wire, it was nearly sunup.

The tank tore through this wire, dragging the posts right out of the sand. The German inside loosed off with his machine gun. Tito, close beside the tank, saw sharp little flashes, like fireflies, break out across the face of the hill two hundred yards away. Then the air was full of swift things that whined and hissed; slugs clanged against the iron plates and ricocheted away in every direction; bullets ripped into the sand, and men were hit. The tank went on, and the men following crowded as close as they could, and fired their rifles into the air, yelling.

Then the tank stalled in deep sand, and presently the engine stopped inside. It was so close to the hill now that the Federals could fire at it from each flank, and they laid a Lewis gun on the squirming mass of men behind it. A bullet glanced through the machine gun port and flicked out the German's brains, so that the machine gun did not fire any more. The Englishman and the American climbed out of the thing—it was entered from the back—kicked their way clear, and ran at the hill, shooting their pistols. They did not run far.

Meantime Tito, without any clear idea of what was happening, had clung like a cat to the rear of the tank. He had dropped his rifle. He was dislodged by the rush of the two furious *gringos*, and he rolled over in the sand. He saw that nearly every man was down; there was much blood and a great outcry. His hand touched a fallen machete—that was something he understood—now he could give those scoundrels yonder a pill!

HE GOT to his feet and gathered himself. Something struck into the base of his strong brown throat, and he wavered on his legs. It clutched at his windpipe; he couldn't breathe. The sand came up and hit him in the face; he turned over, stiffly, clawing at his neck, and he went down into the dark . . .

Next day the Federals sent out a burial party, at the direction of the North American Admiral, who didn't want to shift his anchorage when the wind blew offshore. The Federal officer in charge of the detail prodded around for any effects of value, as was his right. He took a little thin medallion from the neck of one body, and was interested to note that the bullet which killed the fellow had gone squarely through the center of his poor *escudito*. The silver was too light to be worth anything, but he considered that it would make a nice keepsake . . .





Illustrations by
W. E. Heitland

¶ *The little 'un's tactics moved the retired champion to warm respect, and the Squire wished that Heaven had given him such a son.*

By Leonard Merrick

Xmas for 4



Harold made a confession of his love—and Gloria promptly accepted him.

CHRISTMAS was nigh. In the old village church deft, reverent hands twined emblems of the season. On the manor drive the carol singers had assembled. And behind the mullioned windows, lone in the Yule logs' glow, the squire sat, grim, remorseless, steeling his heart against the child he had disowned.

To a footman who entered timorously, the squire said, "Go and 'oof them blighters out! Tell that swine at the lodge, if 'e lets them come yowling 'ere again, I'll break 'is blasted neck."

The minion made a suitable reply, and the master of the manor reverted to his occupation. Moodily gulping gin and water, he gazed into the past. This was it:

Two little boys—sons of storekeepers in the same English townlet—bore the surnames of Penny and Rudge. Penny was slender; Rudge was brawny. Penny was refined and studious; Rudge was common and a dunce. Penny developed an interest in anatomy, and was always messing about with bones in his spare time; Rudge grew more truculent every year, and derived his chief enjoyment from punching bigger boys' heads. The parson predicted that Penny would distinguish himself, and that Rudge's parents would find him a sore trial.

The prediction was not fulfilled. Penny put his father to disastrous expense and became a medical man—and remained painfully obscure; Rudge showed promise as a money-maker from his seventeenth summer, and became a pugilist—and won world-wide adulation. Penny was never rewarded with more than a pittance for the science of relieving physical ills; Rudge was rewarded with a dazzling fortune for the science of inflicting all the physical ill that he could.

After the war, Rudge, by then a widower, bought an estate in Sussex, and retired from the ring to a life of affluent ease. As it happened, his domain was in the vicinity of Penny's practise.

People said of the squire that he was hard—hard in his nature, as well as in his frame—but under his arrogance lurked tenderness for his daughter. Though he was as keenly alive to the value of money as any other pugilist, and had no cause to set much store on education, he had been lavish in the matter of school-fees for Gloria. The B. A.'s and M. A.'s who instructed her had not taught her to speak her own language correctly, but the atrocities she committed on it were no worse than those it suffered in the diction of most English girls of the highest birth.

Rudge, as he was never tired of telling her, "meant 'er to marry a nob." It was the fly in his ointment that he had not been given a knighthood, and all the mind that he possessed was set upon having a lord for a son-in-law.

This cherished and worthy aim of his might have been accomplished but for a boil on his neck. It was an obstinate boil, and he sent for the village doctor to lance it. Penny ventured to inform him that they had been acquainted in their boyhood; and the squire, without a trace of condescension, as affably as if the doctor had been his social equal, replied, "Blimey! What, you, young Penny? Well, I never! 'Ow you been doing?"

"Oh, so-so," said Penny, trying to sound prosperous, "so-so!"

"I remember the odds was five to one on *you* in them days," grinned the squire. "You must come again. You must come in one evening. Bring the missis. 'Appy to see you."

"I've lost my wife. I'm alone now—my son isn't here."

"Oh, got a son, 'ave you? 'E a doctor too?" asked Rudge.

"Oh dear, no! Harold is on the stage."

"What, an actor? I suppose they've made 'im a knight?" said Rudge morosely.

"A knight? Harold? Oh, Harold isn't a celebrity; he's only—er—— It's early days yet. Up-hill work at the start."

"Come in again," repeated Rudge. "Come in and smoke a cigar with me. Dull 'ole, ain't it? You'll be somebody to talk to. 'Ow long's this boil going to worry me?"

Thus the acquaintance was resumed. And some weeks later Harold Penny came down to stay with his father, and was presented at the manor. To his surprise, he found Bill Rudge's daughter attractive—and the attraction was mutual. She asked him if he was keen on golf. He was a nice young fellow, though he had exaggerated ideas of the importance of the theater—and the girl had charm, though she raved about revues and didn't know who Shaw was. The links drew them daily. They had nothing in common except youth, but it served.

Harold told her of his ambition to play Hamlet, and though she thought it a strange, sad, dull desire, she tried to enter into it. He talked to her of the difficulties of his profession, and although he owned that the best salary he had had was seven pounds a week, she was at the club-house again the next afternoon. On the day before his visit closed he made an unpremeditated confession of his love—and Gloria, who had long since decided he was to do it, promptly accepted him.

Gazing into the long-gone past this evening, the squire relived furious scenes in the manor after the news was broken to him. And he relived his defeat on the morning when he found that the girl had disappeared. It was the heaviest blow he had ever taken.

"She's 'ad to pay for it," he growled now. "'Er, and 'er 'Arold, and the 'anky-panky doctor too. Gord blast everybody," muttered the squire, unconsciously misquoting Tiny Tim.

Suddenly, in the silence, the bell of the hall door pealed. The timorous footman reappeared, and said: "Doctor Penny."

Before he could be refused admission, the intruder, caked in snow, walked briskly into the room.

"Forgot what I told you last time I spoke to you?" roared the squire, springing to his feet.

"No, Squire. But I've got a message for you." He waited till the servant had withdrawn, and then went on: "Your daughter is down here—three miles off, in Redgate. Squire, she loves you, in spite of everything. She wants you to make it up with her. I promised her I'd speak to you; I said I'd do all I could."

For a second Rudge stood voiceless. Then he said hoarsely: "Well, you done it—I've 'eard all I mean to 'ear. Out with you—quick!"

"Squire!" cried the doctor. "Won't you be human? Ten years is a long time. It wasn't a crime of them to be fond of each other—and they've been in tight corners, with no one to lend



¶ *"Dash it! I do feel such a fool," said Billy, with his dangling curls. But there was general praise for him when the curtain fell.*

them a hand. I haven't been much use—I'm too poor myself."

"Pity you didn't think of that before you put 'im up to run away with 'er! You thought you was being very clever, didn't you? Well, you see, it didn't come off. All 'e got out of it was a wife and child to keep. *You* 'aven't done too well by it neither —I dessay it's cost you a bit more than you could afford."

"Squire," exclaimed Penny, "I told you at the time I disapproved of the elopement!"

"And *I* told *you*, you was a liar. You was in the know. You 'elped my gal to go against me—you've 'elped to make me un-'appy 'ere these ten years."

"There was no need for you to be unhappy. Your girl and Harold begged your forgiveness—and you showed them the door."

"And I'll do it again if they come back!"

"And when she wrote to you, after Billy was born, you returned the letter to her, torn to bits. I don't know what she gave the boy your name for."

"*I* do. But 'e won't get a 'alfpenny."

"The infant didn't dictate the letter, anyway," said the doctor. "You'd think a lot of him if you saw him. A fine, manly little chap. He's down here too—she'd like to bring him with her, if you let her come. That's one of the things I was to say."

"You've 'ad my answer," said Rudge doggedly. "Tell 'er, what I meant then I mean now. I'm a man of my word."

"You're a foolish man," rejoined Penny; "a foolish, headstrong man. You're pulling your nose to spite your face, as the saying is. Good night. If you should think better of it, they'll be at Redgate all week. They're acting at Plough Hall."

"What you mean by 'they'?" asked Rudge. "*She* ain't acting too?"

"Oh yes. She's been acting a long time now—every little helps. Don't be afraid I shall trouble you any more."

" 'Ere, 'old on a minute," said the squire. "It's bitter cold outside; I don't like you, but you can 'ave a drop of gin first."

"I'll drink with you when I can respect you, Squire," said Penny curtly.

"Go to blazes!" replied the squire, resuming his seat.

But he could not resume his mood. The message affected him more than he had shown. And in the proud man's reverie the messenger's last words reechoed. Could it be true he wasn't respected? It had been his inordinate self-esteem that supported his obduracy. The intrusion had been disturbing. The tidings that his daughter was an actress, and performing locally, offered an insidious temptation. He was weak enough to want to look at her . . . The squire stared into the embers, lost in thought.

ON THE following afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Harold Penny sat in their sorry lodging at Redgate, eagerly awaiting news of the result. The statement that they had been in tight corners was not a flight of fancy. The earnest young repertory actor, with views on Hamlet, was at present enacting the part of Eric Belvedere, in the lowliest company of "No Child to Call Her 'Mother.' " To Gloria fell the rôle of Eric's misjudged wife, who had no child to call her "Mother" for a long while, by reason of the villain's machinations. The child, Little Birdie, was represented by a pudding-faced brat in a dirty muslin frock, and a wig of dangling curls.

"I think, darling," said Harold heavily, "we should have had a wire before this if your father had said yes . . . What's become of Billy?"

"I've let him go and look at the shop-windows—I like to make Christmas time as merry for him as we can," sighed Gloria. "Yes, I'm beginning to lose hope, too. What time is it now?"

"Three o'clock. The guv'nor would have wired the first thing, I feel sure." He started. "Hark! Someone's just rung."

"Listen—it's a man's voice!" Gloria gasped. "Oh, Harold, if it's father!" she shrieked, rushing to the passage.

But it was only the manager of the company.

"Oh, Mr. Bowser!" she said ruefully. "Is it you?"

"Looks rather like me. Any reason you should cry about it?" said Mr. Bowser. "Glad I've found you—I wasn't sure of your address. Well, we're in a nice mess at the show. That dratted little girl's come to grief, falling out of a swing-boat! We can't play the piece without a Litt'e Birdie."

They gazed at him in dumb dismay.

"Can't find a girl in Redgate and rehearse her between this and eight o'clock! There's just one thing to be done, and that's all. Your boy's seen the piece often enough—we must put him on for the part for the rest of the week. It may be a bit of a tussle to get him into the frock, but the wig ought to do."

"He's out," answered the parents hesitatingly.

"He would be!" Mr. Bowser replied. "Well, start rehearsing him as soon as he comes back. If *he* don't play Little Birdie tonight, we can't take the curtain up. Of cour.e, he'll be paid."

"I don't think he'd like the idea," said Harold.

"I was just thinking the same thing," said Gloria. "I don't think he'd like it at all, playing a baby girl."

"My word!" protested Mr. Bowser. "He should be precious thankful to get the chance."

"Here he is!" said Gloria, as the door opened.

And Billy, advancing brightly, said, "How do you do, Mr. Bowser? Have you come to tea?"

"Nice little lad," observed the manager. "Very nice gentlemanly manners. No, I haven't time to stay to tea. Come here, sonny. I've got a treat for you. I'm going to let you play Little Birdie tonight. There! What do you say to that?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Bowser," said Billy promptly.

"Let me talk to him," said Gloria. "Billy, we're in trouble at the show. Lottie has hurt herself, and we want you to be Little Birdie instead, to help us all—Dad and Mr. Bowser and me."

"Oh, that's different," faltered Billy. "Do you think I can, Mumsie? Is she hurt much?"

"I'm afraid I didn't ask, dear; I was too upset."

"It's me that's hurt most," said the manager; "but I'm told her face'll be a disgusting sight for weeks."

"Do you think I *can*?" repeated Billy.

"Of course you can, my noble sportsman!" declared Mr. Bowser. "You'll make a hit in the part. Now get to work with him, both of you! And bring him down early, so that we can run through the business with him on the stage."

They were arduous hours that followed, though the part was brief. The boy's abashment at impersonating a girl much his junior made progress slow. Twice, instead of lisping the line of Little Birdie, he burst forth, "Dash it! I do feel such a fool."

"You won't say that on the stage, will you, old chap?" asked Harold anxiously.

"No, Dad, of course I shan't!" scoffed Billy. "I shall feel a fool, but I'm not going to *be* one."

And at the hall he bore the ordeal bravely. His lips were tight set before the mirror of the dressing-room, as he viewed himself with dangling curls, in the muslin frock that was ludicrously short. And at one point of the performance, when somebody tittered at him, Gloria felt his body quiver in her arms.

"You're doing it beautifully, darling," she told him under her breath, and his father whispered, "You're a hero, Billy—by Jove, I'm proud of you!"

There was general praise for him when the curtain fell. Billy felt better in the buzz of compliment.

What irked the deputy most, after he had been lisping the infantile lines of Little Birdie for two or three nights, was the local notoriety he had attained. People cast amused glances at him in the streets, and a tradesman's boy on a bicycle shrilled derision every time he passed him. Billy's eyes flashed. Fortunately, however, a new Little Birdie of the right sex had been acquired by now, and the indignity was almost over.

It was the relentless squire's healthful practise to take a daily walk and several times during the week he had bent mechanical steps towards Redgate. But before he had covered more than half the distance these steps had always been restrained—and it wasn't till Saturday that he got there.

The little High Street was astir when he arrived, for it was Christmas Eve. Under his bushy brows his glances at the passers-by were keen. In the window of the Gallon Can he observed a playbill of Plough Hall, and paused to examine it. The name of Gloria Penny was not visible. He inferred correctly that for professional purposes she had adopted one.

Even now he had not made up his mind to attend the performance. He inclined to view his discarded daughter once again, without her knowledge, but if she or her husband saw him at the show, his presence would be taken as a sign of weakness—he'd be giving them a bit of satisfaction. He wished he knew the hall better—perhaps it was big enough for him to look in for half an hour without any risk. He inquired of a loafer whereabouts it was—and proceeded, through purlieus, to survey it.

He proceeded ponderingly, but as he reached the public baths and wash-house his meditations were suddenly deranged by a tumult of ecstatic cries. They held a note that woke sweet memories in the squire's mind. Quickening his pace, he turned the corner, and saw a posse of vulgar urchins rejoicing at the spectacle of a fight.

THE combatants were a small boy and a boy much bigger; and as the squire instinctively stopped, the small boy delivered a blow with such admirable judgment that an exclamation of approval burst from the squire's lips. This approval waxed fast to wonder. The little 'un fought with an *élan* that gave promise of a brilliant future, and his tactics were worthy of a far riper age. The attentions he paid to the taller boy's solar plexus moved the retired champion to warm respect.

Bill Rudge stood absorbed. In his mounting enthusiasm for what he saw, his personal affairs were forgotten. The qualities that he beheld stirred him to affection. The heart of the master went out to the child—and he wished that Heaven had given him such a son.

"Boy," he said, in deep tones, when the other lad had had enough, "you got a gift for it. You got a great gift. What's your name?"

"Billy Penny," said the victor, putting on his coat.

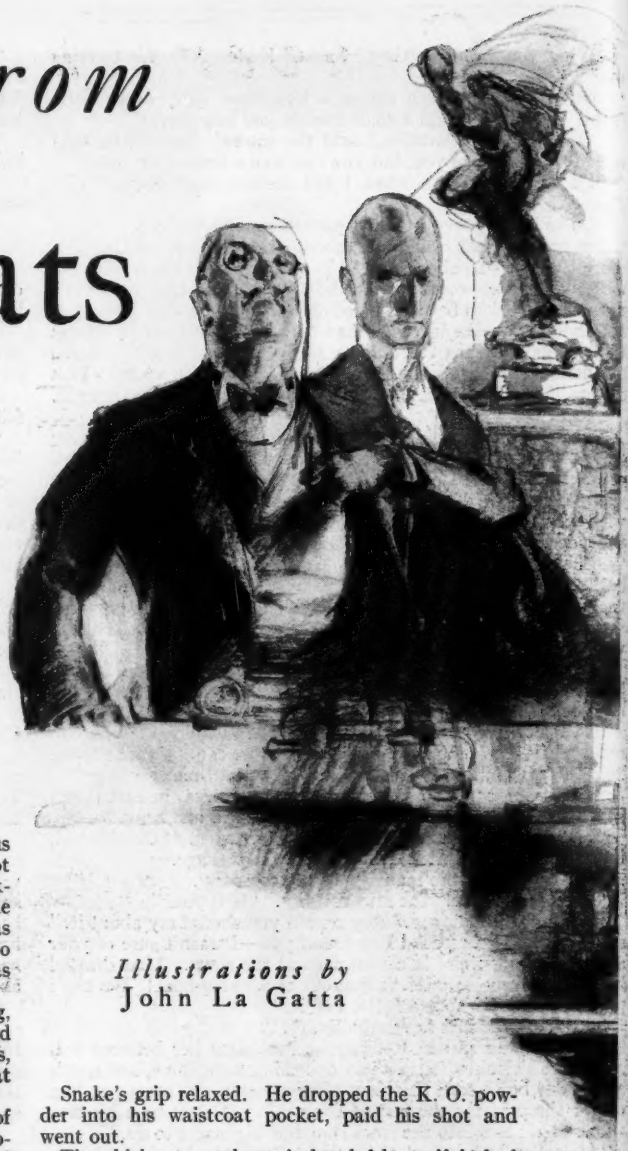
"Billy Penny?" panted the squire. His strong frame trembled. " 'Penny,' did you say? 'Ere, is your mother's name Gloria?"

"Yes; do you know her? That cad boshed me. He's been boshing me all the week—calling out 'Little Birdie' and things."

No word save the first reached the man's consciousness; his exultation sang so loud that it deafened him to the rest. "Great 'eavens, I might ha' guessed it," breathed the squire devoutly—" 'e gets it from *me!*" In the torrent of his emotion the icy resentment he had nursed so long was melted into tenderness.

His voice shook, as he asked, "Where's your diggings, kid?" He bade his grandson lead him there. Taking the child's hand in his, the squire walked rapidly towards the wistful hearth, where joy soon reigned supreme.

Roses from Wild Oats



Illustrations by
John La Gatta

ALL those tall cities which stand with their feet in fresh water or salt water are wet cities. Of these New York is the tallest and the wettest.

Snake Anderson, so called from his peculiar ability to gain oodles of yards for his college through a broken field, had not been in New York much longer than long enough to change his shirt before he had located an old-fashioned saloon, with a dark mahogany bar to rest glasses on, a bright brass rail to rest feet on, and boxes filled with white sand to spit in.

On his first visit to this saloon, Snake did not remain very long, but he managed to make himself conspicuous. Other customers flashed thick rolls of bills, but Snake's roll was thicker. Other customers sported diamond rings and pins. But Snake's diamonds were larger—and *real*. If these things had not made him conspicuous, his long slim body topped with shoulders one size and a half too big for it, and his finely poised round head would have done the trick. Indeed, Snake's beauty would have made him conspicuous anywhere.

On his second visit to the saloon (after a show, of whose chorus it would have been only a quibble to say that they were not naked) Snake found himself engaged in conversation with a thick-set gentleman of agreeable address. They were standing at one end of the bar—each had treated the other twice, and Snake was treating for the third time, when just behind their backs two voices at once broke into sudden angry speech, and a chair was overthrown.

Snake started to turn his head to see what was happening, and at the same instant that instinct or sixth sense which had been a secret of his zigzag dashes through opposing tackles, caused him to stop that turn of the head short and look back at his glass of whisky and soda.

A thick thumb and forefinger seemed to be on the point of dropping into that glass a small white lump of crystalline substance. With a speed little short of electric, Snake's right hand closed about the hand to which the thumb and forefinger belonged, and Snake's left hand slid the whisky and soda a little to one side so that when the crystalline lump did fall, it should not fall into alcohol and perish but onto the dry bar and be saved.

The knuckles of Snake's right hand whitened and he spoke in a voice that was no more than a whisper:

"If you don't drop that and tell me what it is, bones will be broken."

The thick-set gentleman of agreeable address, to whom the hand that was being squeezed belonged, turned a despairing S. O. S. look upon the proprietor of the place, but that one, though interested perhaps in success, held himself coolly aloof from failure, turned his broad back squarely upon the scene and began to polish a glass with a towel.

The bones and sinews of the squeezed hand creaked, and the crystalline lump fell gently upon the bar.

"What is it?" Snake whispered. "Quick!"

It was a cool night, but from every pore in the pale face of the thick-set gentleman sweat was already pouring. He had had enough pain—all he could stand.

"It's K. O. powder," he said. "Lemme go."

"What does it do?"

"Puts you to sleep."

"*Kills* you?"

"No. Puts you to sleep for a couple of hours."

"And you wake with no money and no diamonds, and nothing but a bad taste in your mouth and a bad ache in your head? Is that it?"

"Yes. And you lemme go. Curse you!"

Snake's grip relaxed. He dropped the K. O. powder into his waistcoat pocket, paid his shot and went out.

The thick-set gentleman's hand felt as if it had been run over by a trolley-car, but the rest of him was even sorer, and if he had had the power to boil the proprietor of the saloon and Snake Anderson in the same kettle of oil he would have done so, and enjoyed every luscious second of their agony.

SNAKE slept the sleep of one who is deeply satisfied. Just because he was young and from Texas and hadn't graduated from Yale or Harvard but from a Western university was no reason for thinking he was a boob. Put K. O. powder in his drinks and rob him! They would, would they! He'd show them! Just because he wanted to have a little fling before he settled down to work didn't mean that he needed a nurse! Settle down to work? What work? And with a reiteration of that question "*What* work?" he had fallen asleep.

And he had waked in the same reiterative frame of mind. "When am I going to work, and what am I going to work at?" If he had had to work he could more easily have answered these questions. But he didn't really have to work and so he kept postponing the issue. "Let's wait till I've had my fling," he would say, and he would rise from his bed, and get out of his pajamas, and after certain violent twisting and stretching exercises, plunge into cold water, dress, breakfast and take up his fling more or less where he had left it off the night before.

He was very conscientious about his fling. He believed devoutly that every man, however rich and fortunate, ought to work. and that no man, no matter how wise, kind and considerate. could ever settle down and make a success of it until he had had a fling.

By *Gouverneur Morris*

The Love Story *of a* Young Man *from the* SOUTH



¶ *"Idiot that I am, I have left my purse somewhere," said the girl. Snake's moment had come; "I thought you might need this," he said.*

In these days of flasks and flappers, when perhaps Baby Peggy alone is thought to be innocent, it may revolt the reader to learn that Snake Anderson was innocent too, and fling or no fling, proposed to remain so. Within the periphery of the fling which he was now enjoying no dark angel would be allowed to pierce. He would see all the shows in New York, eat all the lobster and oyster and caviar that he could swallow, and he would gamble in clubs and in Wall Street until—well, until you could call it a fling; and then he would go back to Texas and answer those perplexing questions about work. Where? And at what?

Resolved that no woman should play any part in his fling, Snake Anderson walked down the corridor and turned the corner in time to see the door of an elevator close and shut out from further examination the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. Then he perceived on the floor, just in front of the door which had just closed, a bead bag. It was gold-mounted, and the variously colored beads formed a charming view of Pisa with its leaning tower.

A second elevator arrived and dropped Snake to the ground floor. Afar off he beheld his beauty just entering a compartment of the revolving door which opened on Park Avenue. He himself, being very swift of foot, reached the revolving door in time to see her enter a taxi and drive off. He flung himself into another taxi and told the driver to follow the one ahead. The chase led him to a famous jeweler's palace of the fine arts. And when he had actually caught up with the beautiful girl she was already in conversation with a clerk who presided over a long glass counter filled with sleeve-links for gentlemen.

Snake had been taught that it is bad manners to interrupt, and so he stood, a little aloof, and watched her.

When she had selected a pair of gold and platinum links, solid, plain and smart, she said, "I will take those." And then she laughed and displayed a pair of empty hands and said, "No, I won't either. Not just now, anyway. Idiot that I am I have left my purse somewhere."

Snake's moment had come. He stepped forward.

"I *thought* you might need this," he said.

"Well," said the girl, "I must say you thought a most accurate and thoughtful thought. How can I ever thank you, and where did you find it, and—and how did you know it was mine?"

Snake related the whole adventure of the bead bag, and the girl opened the said bag and from an ample collection of greenbacks and yellowbacks paid the clerk for the sleeve-links. And then, in answer to a question, she said:

"Yes, please. Put them in a nice little box and have them wrapped up. I'll take them with me." Then she turned to Snake and said, "So we're stopping at the same hotel. Have you been in New York long?"

He blushed and said, "Not very." How could she know that he wasn't the scion of a Knickerbocker family who belonged in New York? Then he added, "I'm just here for a little fun and instruction."

"Oh," she exclaimed, "if you are looking for instruction you should come with me to the Hispanic Museum. It wouldn't be

proper for me to take you, but I have a debt to pay, and if you wanted to come, I would throw propriety to the winds."

"Well," said Snake, "I do want to go. Awfully!"

Her eyes, blue, immense, amused and honest, looked straight into his for a second.

"You shall," she said.

SNAKE'S fling, which was to have contained wine, song, gambling and no woman, now contained one woman and none of the other things worth mentioning. And his return to Texas was indefinitely postponed.

On the way to the Hispanic Museum he had told her the story of his life; but very modestly.

His parents had been killed in a train wreck. That was in his freshman year.

Fortunately they had left him enough money to complete his course and quite a large acreage of unproductive land. During his senior year oil had been found on this land. He had made leases and now had a little money coming in all the time. But you never knew when wells would run dry, and so he was treating his income as capital and making investments.

But he did not tell her how big his income really was—something like a thousand dollars a day—and she judged that it was probably in keeping with the modesty of the man himself.

On the way back from the Hispanic Museum they lunched at Riverside, and she told him the story of her life. Her mother was dead. Her father had speculated until he faced ruin and disgrace. His friend, Peter Bradley—*the* Peter Bradley—had come to the rescue. It was she who had persuaded Peter to do this.

Peter had always loved her. She had said, "Peter, if you'll come across and save Father, why, I'll come across." She didn't love Peter. He was too old for her. But she respected him. She would make him a good wife.

"I think," she said, "that it would be easy for me to be a good wife to anybody if I made up my mind to it."

The knowledge that Nancy Oliver was engaged to be married to an elderly man whom she did not love, made the sunlight on the Hudson River and the blue sky above it look gray to Snake Anderson.

He didn't think a girl ought to marry a man she didn't love. And he said so.

"Suppose," he said, "that in the meanwhile you fall in love with somebody."

"Suppose I did," she said. "I might. What of it? It would be just the same as if I fell in love with somebody afterward. I'd stick. I'd keep my eyes in the boat. That's part of being a good wife."

"Where is Mr. Bradley?"

"In Europe. We are to be married in the autumn."

"It's a crime."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Lis-son. If you were in love with me, do you know what I'd do? I'd make you marry me. I wouldn't let you keep your word to Bradley. I'd kidnap you. I'd knock you cuckoo if necessary and when you came to you'd be a prisoner, and you wouldn't know where you were, and you'd have nothing but bread and water until you gave in."

"It doesn't sound very loving."

"Maybe not. But it would be for your own good."

Two days later he knew that he was in love with her, and that he would never be in love with anybody else. Five days later she admitted that she was in love with him, but he could not shake her from her honorable intention to marry Bradley. He argued with her until he was almost angry. And she cried a little.

Those tears finished Snake. And he determined that he would save her from Bradley at any cost.

Nevertheless he procrastinated until it was learned that Mr. Bradley had actually sailed from Southampton. It was not until that moment that Snake recalled the lump of K. O. powder that he had put in the pocket of his waistcoat. It was still there. And with that knowledge he made his plans. They kept him pretty busy for two days.

"Lis-son," he said to her over the phone one morning, "I'm going first to the bank, and then I'm going to buy a car. Want to come? We'll go for a drive and see if the car's any good."

She wanted to come.

While he cashed a check, she stood at a distance, but was able to note that the cheerful cashier passed out to him very many thousands of dollars through his little window. She counted as he counted twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five. Snake stuffed the money into his inside pocket.

They chose a blue sedan. It cost sixty-three hundred dollars. Snake wrote a check for the amount.

And Nancy thought to herself, "Hum. I had no idea he was so flush."

Two hours later they had reached the outskirts of the city, and Nancy said:

"Where are we going?"

"To a road-house," said Snake, "where you can still get a good cocktail and a glass of vino."

And then he began to make love to her and plead with her and beg her to marry him instead of Bradley. But she would not say that she would. And they came to a white farmhouse that stood back from the road among elm-trees, and had a sign which advertised chicken dinners.

"Here we are," said Snake, "and even if you don't love me, I'm hungry. So there!"

Nancy was hungry too. They ordered fried chicken, salad, corn on the cob, cornbread and "special coffee." For this, as the proprietor hinted, would be cool and red. But first they had cocktails.

When the cocktails were put before them, Snake, a curious suppressed excitement in his voice, said, "That's an amusing print." And pointed. While Nancy glanced at a strangely colored lithograph of two Mississippi steamboats racing at night, Snake, whose strong hand was shaking a little, dropped something into her cocktail.

Nancy raised it half-way to her lips and said, "And that's another funny one—right behind you."

Snake turned his head. And when he had looked at the other funny one, he looked back at Nancy, and lifting his cocktail said, "Here's how, my dear," and drank it. Nancy drank hers. And laughed.

Snake also laughed, but to himself. And to himself he said, "You little know, my darling, that when you come to, you'll be a prisoner, and that you'll stay a prisoner until you get tired of it, and that when you stop being a prisoner you'll be Mrs. Snake Anderson, and Bradley can go to the devil."

And as he thought these things, he realized that he was very sleepy, and that his eyes wanted to close.

"It's very stuffy in here," he said.

But it wasn't in the least. It was cool and fresh and smelled pleasantly of spilt beer and wine.

"I'll just open the window," he said.

BUT on the way to the window waves of dizziness overcame him, and he staggered to a horsehair sofa and sat heavily down. A moment later he rolled over on his side and fell sound asleep.

With great speed and precision Nancy seated herself by his side and went through his pockets, first removing his diamond ring and scarf-pin.

With the twenty-five thousand dollars in his inside pocket were some letters. These were of no value to Nancy, but her woman's curiosity caused her to examine them. They were from Snake's lawyer in Texas. And she learned for the first time that the young man who sincerely loved her and whom she was busy robbing had an income of nearly a thousand dollars a day.

Nancy did some very quick thinking.

And when she heard the farmer's wife approaching with the fried chicken, she put back the letters and the money in Snake's pocket, the ring on his finger and the pin in his scarf.

"My husband," she explained, "was up all night. He's simply passed out, poor fellow, and I'm not going to wake him . . . The chicken looks and smells perfectly delicious."

At half past four Snake Anderson was able to pay his bill and to stagger out to the sedan. But he did not feel able to drive. Nancy drove.

She was solicitous and full of sympathy.

"You frightened me so," she said. "I thought you were going to die, and if you had died, I would have died too. Does your head ache frightfully?"

"Yes, it does," he said. "But if you'd say you'd marry me, I wouldn't care."

"I think," she said, "that I'll have to marry you, even if it's treason to Mr. Bradley. After all, we've only one life to live. But I can never face Mr. Bradley and tell him. Will you be good to me always?"

"You know I will." His head was clearing. He felt better.



¶ *"That's a funny print," said Snake. While Nancy looked, he dropped something into her cocktail. "And that's another funny one—right behind you," said Nancy.*

He wanted to kiss and to be kissed. "I'm not going to take any chances," he said. "We'll get married first, and then we'll go back to town and pick up our things. We'll go to different hotels in Greenwich and in the morning we can get a license and get everything fixed up."

She leaned her head so that there could be a little kissing. And as she gave him her sweet lips, she thought to herself, "a thousand dollars a day!"

The curious thing about this story is that nobody in Texas has a better wife than Snake Anderson.

And Now They

By George Ade



¶ *Frank A. Vanderlip jumped often and efficiently in the right direction.*

IF I get through this chapter without making it just a Niagara of names. I will be lucky. For I am going to try to keep on listing some of the people I knew between 1890 and 1900 in Cook County, Illinois. As each name is taken from some pigeonhole of memory, I shall be tempted to pause in the enumeration and lapse into rambling reminiscence.

When I emerged from the foliage of Indiana and found desk room in a newspaper office in Chicago, I had a chance to look up at an interesting group of journalists who had arrived and to associate with a diversified swarm of bench-working newspaper slaves who were on the way.

The editor was still a glowing personality instead of a high-powered executive hidden under a bushel. Even as Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett and Charles A. Dana put an individual stamp on every copy of a newspaper coming from one of their New York presses, so we had in the Middle West Wilbur F. Storey, the picturesque mogul of the Chicago Times, Joseph Medill, dominating the influential Tribune, and William Penn Nixon in charge of the orthodox Inter-Ocean. When these dropped out of the picture, the one-man newspaper ceased to be. The double-leaded editorial, thunderously hurled at some impending crisis, was no longer a personal message.

Melville Stone had made a skyrocket success of the News, but had sold out his interest to Victor Lawson. Mr. Hearst had not yet happened along to upset traditions and raise salaries.

The men who had come out of New York State and the New England hills to build up amazing fortunes and make Chicago important in a business way were still on the scene. They were the demigods of the town—great Unapproachables. I refer to such notables as Marshall Field, Philip D. Armour, Levi Z. Leiter, N. K. Fairbank, A. M. Billings, Samuel W. Allerton, Nelson Morris, George M. Pullman, Columbus R. Cummings and those other self-made giants of the period.

I am going to talk about the younger men—the comers—and mostly about those I bumped into because of my newspaper connections.

I was just a little late to be contemporary with Colonel George Harvey, editor and diplomat, Paul Potter, the playwright, Vance Thompson, transplanted to Paris, Harry B. Smith, who was starting in to write all the light operas needed by the American stage, William E. Curtis, the traveling correspondent who later promoted amity with South America, and Charles Dillingham, premier producer of chaste and alluring musical plays.



¶ *Will J. Davis when he was a member of the Chicago Green Room Club.*

These men were just moving eastward from Chicago as I landed.

Beginning with our shop, the Morning News, later the Record, Victor Lawson was our Chief, but we seldom saw him. Eugene Field, already listed, was our main attraction. We newcomers met him once in a while and he was cordial to us, but his real associates were the *literati* who rounded up at McClure's bookshop—Frank Gunsaulus, Frank Bristol, Hamlin Garland, Henry B. Fuller and some others already in the public eye.

Will Schmedtgen was head of the art department. Now he is a painter of outdoor and hunting scenes, and a good one. Already I have spoken of John McCutcheon and Penrhyn Stanlaws and other youngsters of our illustrating room who later made splashes and attracted much attention. In listing the black-and-white students whom I met and knew I must not forget the Leyendecker boys and Henry Hutt, nor Tom Powers, of the freakish imagination and inimitable style, who is still doing his quaint pictures in New York. Nor Henry Reuterdahl, who later painted such impressive pictures of the Navy.

One day, before I became a column conductor, I was rushed over to the Board of Trade to get a story about some upheaval in the grain market. My assignment was to interview George Stone, President of the Board. While I was waiting in his outer office I fell into a talk with a Tribune reporter, a tall, rangy man with a steady eye, a comfortable suit of clothes, and an imposing mustache. He was reporting the grain markets and he generously gave me the inside of the pending complications. I thanked him and asked his name and he said it was Frank Vanderlip.

After that he made the following jumps: from market reporter to editor of a financial weekly, then to private secretary to Secretary of the Treasury Lyman Gage, then to Assistant Treasurer of the United States, then to Vice-President of the National City Bank, then to President of the National City Bank, then to President of the Sleepy Hollow Club. He can't go any higher in this world.

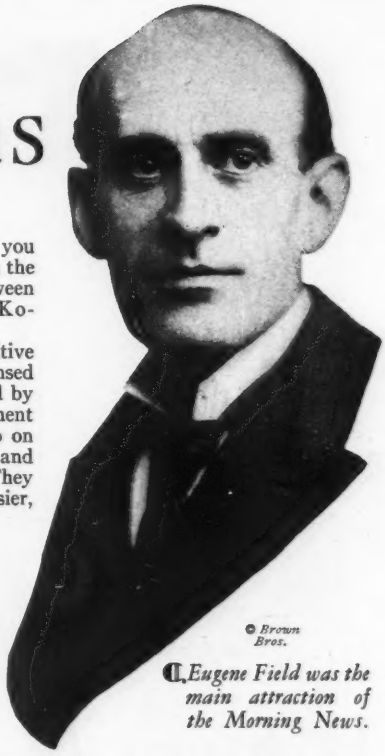
Never have I known a man who jumped so often and so efficiently in the right direction. He was just one of those reporters when I met him at the Board of Trade in 1892, but now I often feel called upon to bring up the fact that I was an usher at his wedding.

When I spoke of the men who worked in our newspaper shop I forgot to say that Will Payne was the city editor of our evening edition and that Amy Leslie, perennial, brilliant and ever-youthful, known to all the show people of the world, was writing dramatic criticisms and she is still an eager first-nighter, with a girlish spirit giving the lie to the gray in her hair.

What a remarkable cluster of dramatic critics we had in Chicago! I was proud to be one of them for a while because they had such high-sounding aristocratic names. Such, for instance, as Elwyn Barron, Delancey Halbert, Hepburn Johns, Barrett Eastman, Lyman Glover and Louis Defoe. To say nothing of James O'Donnell Bennett, Edward McPhelim and Charles Nixon. I must not forget Henry Whigham, who came into our raw settlement direct from Queen's College, Oxford, and began doing theaters for the Tribune. I suppose he was the only dramatic editor who ever won a national golf championship.

A lot of us who wrote about the news of the theater organized a little supper club, known as the Green Room. Harry Powers and Will Davis, of the managers, were members. We had a guest at

Are *All* Famous



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¶ *Eugene Field was the main attraction of the Morning News.*

each getting-together. I remember that we had Henry Irving, Joseph Jefferson, William H. Crane, E. H. Sothern and Otis Skinner.

The Forty Club met once a month for an informal dinner at five-thirty P. M. The early hour headed off any dressing for dinner and permitted our friends of the theater to stay for the whole affair.

"Biff" Hall, the most modest wit that ever scintillated and a rare soul, indeed—he wrote the "Turnover Club" stories—presided with tact and discretion and reserve. We had all of the interesting men of the stage with us, sooner or later, and they were glad to come, because they were not exploited or exhibited.

At each dinner every person present was introduced to the assemblage. Once I had to do the introducing and I attempted the risky experiment of calling out each man's name and then giving the derivation of the name or calling off a few synonyms.

The rule was that after the introducer had passed the loving-cup and presented all the other diners he would pass the cup to the president and introduce him and then the president would introduce the introducer. "Biff" had just been named as a magistrate, because he was popular with the ruling politicians. So, when he stood up and took the cup, I said, "This is Mr. William T. Hall, Hall—haul, meaning a strong pull or drag." This far-fetched play on words evoked a few snickers.

"Biff" handed the cup back to me and then he introduced me as follows:

"Gentlemen, this is Mr. George Ade. Ade—aid—meaning help, assistance, relief, succor."

I had worked for twenty minutes to build up for "Biff" a roar which shook the very rafters of the Wellington Hotel. Of the one million puns which have been fastened to my poor, abbreviated name, this is the only one deserving a medal.

"Biff" wrote a weekly letter to the Dramatic Mirror and it always had a few quips worth remembering and quoting. Once he nearly ruined me. He said in his letter that once upon a time I had been chatting with a lady who said, "Isn't it wonderful how many bright people come from Indiana?"

Whereupon I, the inveterate comic, was supposed to have replied, "Yes, indeed, and the brighter they are the sooner they come."

Of course, I didn't say it. It was just one of those stories being passed around and "Biff" pinned it on me because I was a Hoosier.

I hoped that the paragraph in the dramatic paper would not percolate back to the dear old home but it did, and I began to get marked copies of Indiana newspapers, all frothing with indignation.

I shall never forget an editorial in a South Bend paper. It was headed "Fouls His Own West" and it said, among other things: "The names of Benjamin Harrison, Oliver P. Morton, Thomas A. Hendricks, General Lew Wallace and James Whitcomb Riley will be remembered and honored long after the puny reputation of the whippersnapper who slandered our grand old Commonwealth is buried in hopeless oblivion." The molders of public opinion down our way are touchy.

When Booth Tarkington and Harry Wilson were ready to put on "The Man from Home," a reporter asked "Tark" something about the central character of the play, Daniel Voorhees Pike. "Tark" replied: "Oh, he's just an ordinary, every-day sort of Hoosier—the kind you might see any day on the local train between Logansport and Kokomo."

Well, our sensitive leaders of condensed thought were so riled by that harmless statement that they opened up on "Tark" with light and heavy artillery. They said the ordinary Hoosier, seen on the local train between Logansport and Kokomo, might not be any great shucks for style or polite conversation but he was the bulwark of Indiana's greatness, with a heart of gold, and was many degrees superior to any smart Aleck author who tried to make fun of him.

When the play came out and it was discovered that Dan Pike was Nature's nobleman, who said all the funny things in the play and made fools of the European titled aristocrats, there was a loud chorus of praise and everyone said that "Tark" certainly knew the home-folks just like a book.



¶ *Charles Dillingham produced chaste and alluring musical plays.*

Getting back to the Forty Club, it has been going for forty years without missing a meeting. The supper clubs we founded years ago, such as the Green Room, the Little Room and the "Schmoozers" have all expired. They met late at night and were sleep-robbers.

If you would organize a dining club which will endure, the Forty Club has worked out the rules for you.

Meet once a month at five-thirty P.M. and bar from the room anyone who wears evening clothes.

Do not attempt any uplifting or reforming. No man can enjoy his food while he is brooding over social problems.

Serve only a few courses and have good food.

Have no long speeches. Specialize on stunts and make up programs in advance.

Avoid publicity. Bar the off-color stuff which has corrupted and disintegrated so many "stag" organizations.

The first and only rule adopted by the Forty Club was: "Reporters are never present and the ladies are always present."

The club is now under the management of Wilbur Nesbit. The members came down to my place to play golf one day last summer. The boys sang all of their songs during dinner and next day it was told around that we had a wild party. A lot of good people are inevitably horrified to discover grown-up men sitting around a table and singing, "In the good old summer-time."

The idea seems to be, "We don't do it and they mustn't." Notwithstanding which, I am still standing up for Indiana.

Illustrations by



By Peter B. Kyne

Concluding

Money to Burn

NELLIE wrote that brief record in shorthand. Detective-Sergeant Fahey clamped the receivers over her ears and held the flash-light for her as she spread her note-book out on the front fender of the flivver, leaned over it and prepared to take dictation. The two detectives were also listening in.

Elmer unlocked his front door, switched on the light and walked on into his bedroom to put away his overcoat and hat before returning to the stuffy little parlor where his Nemesis awaited him. Nellie thrilled with a vast pride as his first words came clearly to them via the concealed dictograph. The eyebrows of the two detectives went up and Detective-Sergeant Fahey dropped his prognathous jaw in a comical grimace, for without an instant's hesitation Elmer had seized the initiative by going directly to the attack.

"Well, Colorado Charley, old settler," he began blithely, "how about a little drink to wash the dust of travel out of your lying throat? I mean a drink of water. I wouldn't waste liquor on a skunk like you."

"Say-y," Colorado Charley came back at him lamely, "where do you get that stuff?"

"Draw it out of a faucet," chirped Elmer cheerfully. "Doris, or whatever your real name is, you wired me for a conference, but you didn't tell me this confidence man was coming with you. Let's understand each other, Doris. Your boy friend here is out of the picture. Charley, if I hear one peep out of you I'll knock you for a double loop. That being clearly understood, say your say, Doris, and then get to blazes out of here before I throw you out."

Followed about five seconds of profound silence, then:

"Hands up, Charley, my boy! Don't pull the gun—please. There, that's ever so much more sensible. You don't suppose I'd be boob enough to go into conference with Doris, in your presence, without heeling myself, do you? Stand up now and back slowly toward me while I help myself to that little pistol of yours. Here's the gun, Charley. I'll keep the cartridges. Well, Doris, dear lost light of my life, you were about to say something!"

"I came to ask you why you went back on me the way you did," the girl's voice came to the listeners. It was hard and high-pitched. She was coldly furious.

"You know now why I went back on you. I don't like the company you keep."

"What's wrong with the company?"

"His police record is over there on the what-not. Want a look at it? Perhaps you'd like to verify his photograph with the original and check up on his Bertillon measurements."

"Quit stalling, Mae, and get down to business," Colorado Charley growled testily.

"I told you, Charley, that if I heard one little peep out of

R. F. Schabelitz



A Million Dollar Love Story

you I'd knock you for a double loop," Elmer reminded his unwelcome guest. "I admit I went back on my promise to lend Doris or Mae or whatever her name is a thousand dollars, but I'm not going back on my promise to you."

There was a suppressed scream, the sound of shuffling feet, the crash of furniture—silence! Nellie trembled violently and turned a white, pitiful face to Detective-Sergeant Fahey, who laid his great paw on her little brown hand.

"Can the kid go some?" he demanded fiercely. "Maybe I'd better pop out an' see if Colorado Charley has done for him with a knife. He always carries one."

"Elmer can whip his weight in wildcats," Nellie faltered bravely.

"He's spoilin' everything for us," Detective-Sergeant Lipowsky complained bitterly. "He don't run true to form. We figured he'd wilt; figured they'd scare him to death and get all the cash he has on hand now and a promissory note for the balance, when we could nab 'em for blackmail. As it is he ain't give them a chance to make their proposition, so what've we got to hang a case on?"

"He's a bonehead!" Detective-Sergeant Fahey hissed. "He's a hick! But, Lord, how I love him!" he added.

Nellie looked up at him gratefully. "You're a dear," she said simply.

A voice came over the dictograph again. Elmer was speaking.

¶ *"Will you take me back —on probation?" pleaded Elmer. "Kiss me, booby," Nellie commanded fiercely.*

"While dear Charley is wandering in dreamland, Doris, suppose you spill your bad news."

"My dear Elmer," the girl replied in dulcet tones, "we didn't come here to spill any bad news. All we wanted was an explanation of your curious and embarrassing action in ordering payment stopped on your check."

"I've explained," said Elmer grimly.

"So you have, Elmer. But that alleged criminal record you allude to doesn't prove my brother a criminal. I know he isn't. And I haven't heard you say you have a criminal record of me. If you had, I imagine you'd confront me with it."

"I haven't—but I have hopes. The unknown friend who sent me the information on Charley may develop additional interest and send me news of you."

"You seem to forget that I am your fiancée."

"You're right—I do. I never was your fiancé. I never asked you to marry me."

"Well, you certainly gave me the impression that we were engaged. The letters you wrote me will be rather hard to explain, and I'm here to tell you that no small-town sheik can treat me the way you've treated me and get away with it."

"Oh, I expected to be blackmailed under threat of a suit for breach of promise!"

"Blackmail? I have said nothing about blackmail. I am not here to threaten you, Elmer. I came up to talk the situation over sensibly."

"That isn't possible. I'm one of those fellows who will not be blackmailed, cajoled, threatened or persuaded. I know what you have in mind and a rose by any other name would smell as sweet . . . Hello, Charley, did the little birdies sing sweetly to you while you were out? Pick yourself up off the floor, you swine, and betake yourself and your partner out of here. On your way, both of you!"

"Come, Harvey," Doris urged complacently. "I will ask Mr. Clarke to explain to me at a more appropriate time—say in the midst of his campaign for mayor. You dirty skunk," she added, her fury gaining control at last, "I'll make you feel as ridiculous as you've made me feel. That much at least I can do and you watch me do it. I didn't come here to blackmail you but——"

"Yes, yes, I know my letters to you will look silly in the public prints, but I'll be shot if I'll buy them back," said Elmer Clarke.

"No?" The girl's voice rose sneeringly. "Evidently you've forgotten all the drippy things you wrote me. I'll send you copies to refresh your memory and induce a change of mind on your part, little boy friend."

"How much do you want for them?" Elmer demanded.

"Ah-hah! So you *are* interested, aren't you? Well, Elmer, those letters will cost you tonight exactly five thousand dollars in cash, and a promissory note for one hundred thousand secured by an assignment of an interest for that amount in your Uncle Hiram's estate. You come to Los Angeles and my lawyer will arrange the details."

"But this *is* blackmail," Elmer protested.

"I dislike the word. Call it heart-balm," the girl corrected him. "You can give me your check for the five thousand now. I'll take a chance on your not stopping payment this time."

"I *am* a high-priced writing man, am I not?" Elmer retorted good-naturedly. "Doris, dear one, I didn't have the slightest idea of capitulating. I merely had a curiosity to know what price you'd ask. Now that I know it, I'm no longer interested. Really, I wouldn't give you a canceled postage-stamp for all those letters. Get out, and many thanks to you for the extremely cheap education you've lavished on me. You're the first woman I've ever made an ass of myself over, Doris, and you'll be the last. The next sweetheart I have is going to be a regular girl. Charley! Don't linger. Nighty-night!"

There was the sound of a door closing. Silence.

Out in the garage Detective-Sergeants Fahey and Lipowsky



¶. "*While dear Charley is*



wandering in dreamland, Doris, suppose you spill your bad news," said Elmer.

exchanged glances. "I thought the boy was goin' to spill the beans on us, Lippy," Fahey declared, "but at the finish he sure came through noble."

"No thanks to him," growled Lipowsky. "He was just kiddin' them. Well, we've got enough on them to make the pinch as soon as they get back to Los Angeles. No use botherin' ourselves with them now. They got return tickets."

"Women ain't got no sense," Fahey decided. "Get 'em mad an' they'll tell everything they know—present company excepted," he added gallantly. "I don't suppose you're goin' to tell Elmer all you know, are yuh?"

"Indeed not! That would only embarrass him."

Lipowsky winked at Fahey.

"Don't you think Elmer's awfully courageous?" Nellie pleaded.

"I dunno whether he's courageous or crazy or a plain boob, but whatever makes him go the way he does, I'm for him. Well, guess our job's done—all except gettin' that dictograph out of the house."

"It's Jasper's day off tomorrow," Nellie informed him. "I'll make Elmer take me to luncheon and then you can run over and get the dictograph. If I were you I'd wind up the wire as far as the back of the house tonight; otherwise Elmer will find it in the morning. You can coil it and conceal it in the grass."

Fahey winked at Lipowsky.

"Meanwhile," Nellie continued, "I'm going home. I'll send Captain Fitzgerald a copy of the transcript of my notes tomorrow. Why do you not arrest those wretches tonight?"

"We're out of our own jurisdiction. Of course we can make the pinch if you want us to, but we'll have to call in the local dicks, and then the news would be all over town in the morning. Better let us handle these birds in Los Angeles. We might get their shyster lawyer, too."

"Go to the head of the class, Mr. Fahey. Thank you very much. Good night."

She slipped noiselessly out the door into Hazel Drive. On that street, midway between C and B Streets, she could see a man and a woman, the man struggling along under the burden of a suit-case and a bag. So Nellie crossed to the other side of Hazel Drive, in order to place distance between herself and Elmer should he chance to be standing on his front porch, and hurried away in pursuit of the couple. She watched them turn in at the principal garage.

"Going to hire a car and go on to San José for the night," she thought. "I'll find out."

She followed boldly into the garage, not thirty feet behind them, and stood listening to Colorado Charley bargaining with the night manager for a closed car to take himself and wife to San José. When they started a few minutes later Nellie Cathcart hired another closed car and followed. At a third-rate San José hotel—which was, however, a first-class hotel in comparison with the Palace Hotel in Pilarcitos—Colorado Charley and his companion registered as Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Skidmore, of Los Angeles, and retired for the night.

Nellie immediately returned to Pilarcitos and crept silently into the Tully home at one o'clock A. M. She did not go to bed immediately, however, but took down the telephone receiver and called for Mr. Fahey at the Palace Hotel.

The detective got out of bed and (*Continued on page 133*)

Yes Man's Land



¶ *"She's one of them stupid Sarahs which would open a telephone book at the last page just to see how it ended!" the director said of Astaire Le Brie.*

YES Man's Land is, of course, that amazing fruit of the labors of Daguerre, Niepce and Edison which we laymen call a motion-picture studio and which the actors laconically refer to as "the lot." Beneath the blinding Klieg lights the affirmative reigns supreme and in the lexicon of the directors' satellites there is no such word as *"No!"*

Listen, my children, and you shall hear of my first and, God willing, my *last* adventure with the movies.

I am Arthur Justin, one-time gentleman farmer of Wales, New York, and until recently in charge of my father's office in Manhattan for the sale of his Florida real estate. You may recall that feverish period when the English Channel and the North Pole were deserted, all roads leading to the Everglade State while Californians sullenly chewed their finger-nails. When the bubble burst, Father was many times a millionaire and I was without my portfolio as his Eastern representative, as my parent closed that office though there were still twenty choice lots to be sold.

The manner in which my precocious dad disposed of this remaining realty was on the front pages of the newspapers for four days!

A Lord Bountiful to the ladies of the chorus, a windfall for the supper clubs and an "angel" for many a tottering Broadway harlequinade, my pleasure-loving sire plunged into the city's night life with renewed enthusiasm, now that he had no business cares whatever. His first gesture was to give a paganish dinner in his magnificent suite at the Fitz-Charlton to twenty of his favorite show girls, scandalizing Miami, his impeccable valet, nicknamed after the origin of Father's wealth. To my utter amazement and indignation, the favors were the twenty lots remaining unsold and despite my frantic protests he thus closed out his holdings, presenting each delighted lady with a parcel of land in Florida!

This famous—or infamous—$500,000 dinner was the talk of New York and, I suppose, of the nation, as the press organizations wired it with various embellishments and photographs from coast to coast. Father laughed heartily at my reproaches, saying that this sensational exploit had won him a billion dollars' worth of publicity for his next commercial venture.

Well, I did not wish to return to my farm, gentle reader. I had quaffed the heady cup of Broadway and I was forced to admit there was much more difference than a few electric signs between Gotham and Wales. However, that was but a contributing element—the real reason I desired to stay in New York was Helene Howe, owner of the ultra-fashionable Mayfair Beauty Shoppe. Frankly, I was madly in love with the beautiful Helene and I had been trying to persuade Father to back her in the opening of a chain of these modern, richly appointed fountains of youth, but thus far without success. My gay progenitor smilingly paid thundering tariffs in the night clubs with scarcely a glance at the totals. His gifts to his favorites of either sex were the largesse of Aladdin's jinn. But in the matter of business, Father was not content to look before leaping; he insisted upon the jump being bridged!

Helene had two brothers, Aubrey and Jack, who were as unlike as chalk and cheese. Both boys were strikingly handsome and immaculately groomed, but there all resemblance ceased. Of delicately molded features, unobtrusive manner and softly modulated voice, Aubrey was a female impersonator of distinction, then winning fame in vaudeville. On the other hand, Jack was built on the lines of a heavyweight boxer and was a gruff cynic who spoke entirely in the slang of the race-track, the prize-ring, the underworld and the variety stage—a spicy patois that frequently required an interpreter. His vocation was a most curious one. Jack was a vermin exterminator, proud of his profession and prouder still of the fact that his strange calling kept him immune to the pangs of manual labor.

Jack demanded and received a hundred dollars and upwards by contract on the promise that he would rid public buildings and private homes of all varieties of vermin. His profits were practically one hundred percent, as his overhead was merely a handful of whatever powdered substance he found nearest to hand to shake into the nests of the insects. Thus he frequently used salt, meal, flour, face powder or talcum, slyly pilfered from the very place he was "ant-proofing." When his wrathful patrons loudly complained via phone that the annoying pests had returned in swarms, Jack would answer calmly:

"Quit squawkin'! Them cunnin' little bugs has brung back others to show 'em my world's famous vermin discourager and to tip off their friends to give your joint the widest of berths. Don't let them ants see they got your goat or you'll be the laughin'-stock of Insectania!"

So the picaresque Jacques.

One evening—that fatal night that was the beginning of all our mishaps!—I accompanied Helene, Jack and Aubrey to a motion-picture theater; one of those huge, gorgeous Broadway

By H. C. Witwer

The *Comedy* of *The* Film *That* Failed

Illustrations by Charles D. Mitchell



palaces of pantomime where, buried beneath wearisome ballet, prolog, jazz bedlam and classical music, organ recital, Charleston dancers and synthetic vaudeville, the "super-feature" film is but a detail. In this instance the picture was "Passion's Shackles" and more of an insult to the adult intelligence than usual. We yawned and fidgeted in our seats, gazing compassionately at each other.

"What a proper bust *this* opera is!" whispered Jack hoarsely. "I seen better pictures on a post-card!"

"Heavens, why the evening dress in the forenoon?" murmured Aubrey. "What do you suppose it is all about?"

"It's about nine reels!" said Helene, with a grimace. "And the mock-director who made it should go back to directing dogs again!"

"Do you know, I honestly believe I could write a better scenario than that one myself!" I exclaimed, half in jest.

"I'm *sure* you could, Arthur!" returned Helene warmly. "Why don't you do it and see what happens?"

"There's a thought for today, Art!" seconded Jack. "Eventially, why not now? If you can't tear off a bigger and better movie than *this* outrage, you don't belong in the same room with a typewriter. Why, I'd throw a flock of sceneryaros myself, only the clickin' of them typewriter keys drives me wild!"

"You could use a pen," suggested Aubrey sarcastically.

"Don't be sill!" grinned Jack. "You know I can't bear the smell of ink. That's why I never worked in a office."

"There's a fortune in writing for the movies," Aubrey resumed. "One of the Bounding Bushwahs, who were on the bill at the Crystal with me last week, got five thousand dollars from somebody for a two-thousand-word synopsis!"

"Please write a movie, Arthur!" pleaded Helene.

Why not? I was doing nothing to earn my bread and living on Father's bounty at the time. Having lost all interest in farming, I had to make *some* move toward finding my niche in life. I thought of Samuel Johnson's assertion, "A man may write at any time, if he set himself doggedly to it!" Gazing speculatively at the moronic story being unfolded on the screen before me and turning over in my mind Samuel's optimistic statement, I took heart. The sardonic observation of De La Bruyère never occurred to me—"A man starts upon a sudden, takes pen, ink and paper and without ever having a thought of it before resolves that he will

write a book. He has no talent at writing, but he wants fifty guineas!"

Well, good people, that was *me!*

Though we spoke of many things in the taxi en route to Helene's apartment, my mind was wandering. Convinced that fame and fortune were waiting impatiently for me to grasp them, I visualized on the flickering screen, "Story by Arthur Justin"! I saw the fair Helene and my one-time skeptical father basking proudly in the reflection of my glory. Opportunity was hammering madly at my door! Was this, then, the divine afflatus?

I said good night to my companions with such preoccupation that Helene suspected a headache and advised aspirin. Aspirin for inspiration! Unable to sleep when I reached my room and retired, I attempted to read, but concentration was beyond me. I was in the grip of a terrific scenario complex! Skimming through the advertisements in the back of a magazine, I sat up electrified by the following:

FROM DRUDGERY TO $50,000 A YEAR!
(Not counting tips.)
YOU CAN DO IT!

Oh, for the life of a scenarist! Learn to write PHOTOPLAYS. We will teach you how in 12 LESSONS. Can be taken at home without your friends knowing it. Producers pleading for NEW ideas! If YOU have one we will turn it into IMPORTANT MONEY for you. Writer's Cramp cured without extra charge. Fill out attached coupon.

Came the dawn, and, alas, I filled out the attached coupon!

To make a short story interesting, friends of radioland, for one hundred dollars I absorbed the above course in photoplay composition and gaily embarked on the hectic career of a scenario writer. A great-uncle of mine had once been the proprietor of a small circus and as a child I had frequently spent glorious vacations traveling with it; the atmosphere never failed to thrill me! I loved the free and easy life, the smell of the sawdust, the hair-raising daring of wild-animal tamers, aerial gymnasts, equestriennes, what-not; the early morning railroad "jumps," the parades before the breathlessly admiring natives of the hinterlands. At the age of twelve, it was my ambition to become a clown when I grew up—an ambition I was now about to fulfil unconsciously.

So for my first motion-picture scenario I took the circus as a motif and after undergoing the exquisite agony of authorship for a month, I completed my ten-reel masterpiece, "A Circus Romance." Perhaps that title was a bit tame from the viewpoint of Yes Man's Land, but at least it was free from sex and vulgarity. I determined at the start that all my photoplays could be viewed without harm by innocent children and that my leading lady would bathe in her bathroom and not before the camera, regardless of the censors' chagrin!

At the end of another seven weeks, "A Circus Romance" had broken all records—for rejections. It swiftly returned from exactly eleven studios in that period of time and Jack naively suggested that I change the title to "The Comeback." In my distress and dejection at the failure of the producers to recognize genius, I called at the Mayfair Beauty Shoppe and sought consolation from the entrancing Helene. She left a patron in a booth to greet me.

"I guess I was not meant to be an author, Helene," I said glumly. "I shall return to my farm at Wales and——"

"That's what *you* think!" she interrupted with animation. "You belong on a farm the same way I belong on the Japanese throne—besides, I don't like the idea of you being foot-loose among chickens, either of the Broadway or barnyard variety. You mustn't let 'em tune you out so easily, Arthur. Why, even if it's a whole month before you dumfound the world as a writer, it would be worth it. Only the other day I read in some big scenarist's confessions that he had to write two movies and a dozen titles before he was the talk of the industry!"



¶ *Father announced calmly to Helene and me: "I*

"I'm sure 'A Circus Romance' would revolutionize motion-picture standards if I could only get it produced," I said. "I don't believe they even read it, it comes back to me so quickly!"

"But *I* read it and so did Jack and Aubrey," returned Helene. "And, honestly, we all thought it was the cat's! What do those funny scissorbills say when they hurl it back to you?"

" 'Not available,' 'We do not make animal pictures,' 'We do not buy original scenarios,' 'Not enough sex appeal,' et cetera *ad nauseam!*" I answered. "All rubber-stamped——"

"Arthur—I have it!" Helene cut me off, her pretty face aglow with excitement. "Listen—your father has thirty-two cents more than Mr. H. Ford. He's restless right now and I've heard him say he wished he had some business to play with. Well, let's furnish him a rattle! Why not proposition him to produce your movie himself?"

My pulse quickened to her contagious enthusiasm and I was at once intrigued by the suggestion. I had never thought of Father in connection with my plunge into the depths of the silent drama.

Tightly gripping my arm, Helene prattled on earnestly. Father had an appointment there that very morning for a scalp treatment. We would lay the matter before him and——

A shrill scream from the booth where Helene had left her patron interrupted our feverish conversation and Helene paled as the acrid odor of burning hair assailed our nostrils.

"Heavens—I left her head in the permanent wave gadget and I forgot to remember!" she breathed horrifiedly and ran to the booth.

I seized a magnificent rug from the floor and quickly followed her, while one of the comely operators ran for water and another for sand, which I afterwards learned was kept in the rear of the salon for just such an emergency. The unfortunate lady was still shrieking hysterically, but by applying the rug, the sand and finally the water, we extinguished the conflagration in her hair. Examination disclosed that she was uninjured, except that her blond tresses were badly scorched. Fortunately, no other clients were in the parlor, as I am certain a panic would have resulted and Helene's business would have been ruined.

The lady, smartly attired and pretty in a rather obviously sophisticated way, was furious. Helene's humble apologies and explanations were brushed angrily aside and the situation was becoming tense when, lo and behold, Father's big car drew up at the door and Helene sighed with relief. Here was Mr. Fix-It himself!

"Hello—why all the excitement?" inquired my parent, the last gasp in what-the-men-will-wear from Prince of Wales hat to King of Spain shoes. "What have you done *now*, Arthur?" he added, surveying me with mock severity.

"It was *me* this time, Mr. Justin," interposed Helene ruefully. "I—we had an accident!"

"How do you get those ways?" barked the irate patron. "*I'm* the one had the accident, but don't worry, you'll have *yours* as soon as I see my lawyer and I don't mean perchance!" Then she turned and regarded Father curiously. "Are you Calvin Justin?" she asked.

Father bowed sweepingly. "This is me myself in person—not a moving-picture," he answered, with a smile that the lady promptly returned.

"I'm Astaire Le Brie," she volunteered coyly, and I began to be alarmed for Father. "I've heard a lot about you and I'm fearfully glad to meet you!"

Father drew her aside, and, glancing at Helene, who was gazing at them saturninely, my apprehension for him increased. My progenitor's spending proclivities had been newspaper copy for months. Known in the night-club belt as "Cabaret Cal," he was the coveted goal of every "gold-digger," if I must use that obnoxious word, from Yonkers to the Battery. I was about to interrupt this tête-à-tête when Father glanced around.

"Eh—I shall drop Miss Le Brie at her rooms," he announced calmly. "Helene, my dear, make my appointment for this afternoon at four. Arthur, from the color of your face I should say you were too full-blooded. Beware of apoplexy, my boy!"

And to my impotent rage and astonishment, Father strode out the door with this brazen female on his arm!

"Well, I'll be—eh—Father is certainly a fast worker, isn't he?" I gasped to the cynically smiling Helene.

"Not your father—I'll state that big blonde is the speed queen!" she laughed harshly. "She slays me! What your papa needs is a guardian. Did you notice her make-up? She's spread it on with the touch of a plasterer! A blonde should never use solid black around the eyes; it ruins the youth of the whole face. Her perfume is out of order, too. Only plump brunettes should apply heavy bouquet odors; blondes should use only light flower perfumes. Well, I suppose she'll never show up now for that lip-peeling job I talked her into."

"Lip-peeling?" I queried, puzzled.

"Sure!" said Helene. "That's the very latest thing to make your lips cherry-red. I'd been treating her for approaching baldness, too."

"But she's just a young woman!" I exclaimed.

"Age has nothing to do with that condition—it's quite common these days," Helene smiled indulgently. "You know, this constant bobbing, marceling and cutting robs the hair of life. Likewise, women are not brushing their hair as often as they did when it was long—they're afraid the curl will come out."

"Well, I'm glad *my* sex is not a slave to cosmetics!" I remarked.

"You needn't curl your lip!" retorted (*Continued on page 114*)



shall drop Miss Le Brie at her rooms. Arthur, beware of apoplexy, my boy!"

By Mary Langham

When My Husband *Said* He *Loved* Another Woman

I SUPPOSE other women must have had an experience something like mine. I cannot be the only wife who after years of marriage suddenly discovers her husband is hers no more. But for them, as for me, it must be very difficult to uproot a mutual existence in which common joys and common sorrows have played their part. Indeed, there are moments when I wonder if, when I divorced my husband, I did uproot all those things which made our home.

I had heard gossip as to Will's interest in his pretty secretary, but I had dismissed it as quite unimportant. Ruth Ellison was a very clever girl, with a genuine interest in Will's business. My husband is a solicitor, and was making a good income, but in spite of his professional status he was very glad of Ruth's assistance. I also was glad for his sake, and because I liked the girl.

I used to have her down to stay with us at our place on the river, and though she and Will were together a lot I never had the least suspicion they were anything but good friends.

I made the discovery quite accidentally. Will had been at home with an attack of influenza. He used to worry over his cases, and Ruth would come round in the evening when he wanted her and bring the latest details. He was in his study, reading the evening papers and waiting for Ruth to arrive. I walked across the garden and looked in at him through the window. He wasn't in his chair at the table. He was standing up, watching the door, with a look of such eager expectancy that somehow it turned me cold. I had seen that look in his eyes—how many times!—and always I had thrilled to it.

I knew what was going to happen—I tell you I *knew!* The door opened and Ruth came in. She put down her brief case and ran towards my husband. He met her half-way, and they merged together in each other's arms. He kissed her—ah! I knew too well all that he felt. She returned his kisses, her fresh red mouth sought his . . .

I couldn't stand any more. I left the window and went into my room and locked the door.

Will had quite obviously forgotten my existence, for it was not until an hour later that he knocked at my door. I could not open it. I said, trying to speak in my usual voice, that I had a headache and didn't want to be disturbed.

I spent a dreadful night. I had to face a future which in my wildest moments I had never contemplated. I had to face a future without the man I loved.

Will went up to town the next morning. He was terribly concerned when he came to say good-by. He stood at the end of the bed, wrinkling his brows. "I don't like the look of you at all, darling," he insisted. "I wish you'd have a doctor."

He dropped a kiss somewhere in the region of my left ear and went off. As I lay in bed thinking over the last few weeks, I realized that of late his caresses had mostly been of the fugitive kind. I hadn't worried about it. A man's love has many moods, but as long as you are sure of his devotion you can afford to smile at vagaries.

But if you are *not* sure! I sat up in bed with my heart beating fast. I had seen Will kiss Ruth in a way that could mean but one thing.

What was I going to do about it?

I determined I wouldn't be rushed. I wasn't going to give my husband up without a struggle. Comparing myself dispassionately with the girl, I was not at a disadvantage. You see, I happen to be a beautiful woman. It sounds conceited, but it is a fact.

Now the point I had to determine was whether Will would get over his attack of sentimentalism, or if the girl were likely to remain a permanent factor in his life.

The opportunity came sooner than I expected. Will's sister Sylvia called on us one evening. We had left our place on the river and had gone back to town to our jolly little flat.

Now Sylvia always prides herself on coming straight to the point. She exemplified her methods that evening. She told me straight out that she had seen Ruth and Will at Brighton.

I passed the matter over lightly and suggested that they had gone down on business.

Will met Sylvia just as she was leaving. She spoke to him very curtly and sniffed quite audibly, that particular self-righteous sniff which a man always understands.

"Well, Mary," he said, smiling—a quavery little smile, all the same—"what has Sylvia been telling you?"

He looked half frightened and half sullen, and I realized that the moment had come.

"I expect you guess," said I.

"You mean——" He stammered a bit and shifted from one foot to the other. "You mean you know about—Ruth?"

I nodded. "I have known ever since that evening at the bungalow, when I saw you—together."

He flushed and looked desperately uncomfortable. He expected a scene and was grateful I did not make one.

"I suppose you think I'm a beast," said he, "but—but—oh, Mary, how can I tell you? You know I'm fond of you, most awfully fond—but—but—you don't know, you can't think how wonderful she is!"

IT'S AN astonishing thing when you come to think of it—how difficult it is for a man not to tell his wife about his sweetheart! They are all alike in this respect. They simply can't keep off the subject. Will talked to me about my rival as though I had nothing whatever to do with him or her.

"You understand what I mean, Mary?"

"I think so, Will. You mean that to you Ruth stands for romance."

"She's ecstasy," he said. And there was something in his voice that sent me spinning back into the past. He looked like that when, twenty years before, he kissed me—for the first time. "She's so enthusiastic, Mary—and she's so brilliant. She makes me think I'm capable of doing things for which I really haven't the ability."

"I understand," I answered. "You want her; you want romance—and ecstasy as you call it. Well, my dear, I can't keep you from her, can I? I shan't oppose your going. If Ruth cares for you as you do for her, enough to risk conventional sneers, you'll both go off together. I shall stay here—here in our home until you come back."

"You'll stay *here*, Mary?" He looked at me just like a puzzled child. "You don't understand," he said. "Oh, I know it sounds brutal, it is brutal, I suppose, but I can't help it. You see it's like this. I want to marry Ruth—I want to live with her. Will you divorce me, Mary?"

Self-control slipped from the leash and I was the primitive woman fighting for her mate.

"Divorce you?" I said. "You can ask me that? I've given you liberty—I've told you to go to the girl you want. I've not uttered a word of reproach. But this is more than flesh and blood can stand. If I divorce you—what is there left to me? What am I to do with all the years I have to live?"

Will's attitude changed quickly at the note of conflict.

"What are you to do?" he repeated. "You're a beautiful woman, and a clever woman. Surely there's something else to interest you besides me?"

"Oh, don't you understand?" said I, and somehow I felt I was speaking not only for myself, but for every other married woman. "Don't you understand that I've forgotten what it's like to be single? I've forgotten how it feels to be alone? Will, are all the things we've shared together *nothing* to you?"

He did not answer. He stood there dogged and sullen. And I knew that the more I raged, the harder he would grow.



Mary Langham

I cried myself sick that night. I felt I couldn't, I *couldn't* bear it. The injustice of it, the cruelty. But in the morning I grew calm. I faced things with a clear vision.

I decided I would divorce Will, after all. I would divorce my husband in the hope—a mad hope, as it seemed to me—that releasing him, I might hold him.

I smashed my marriage after twenty years to try to save it!

"I'll divorce you, Will," I said.

It was rather dreadful to see the look that flashed into his eyes. He was beside himself with delight, almost effusive in his gratitude.

My own family and Will's were very angry with me, and most of my friends seemed to think that I had done a foolish thing. There were moments, I admit, when I told myself I had been a fool. You see, I had staked not only my future but my past on this one throw. And I had nothing but faith to sustain me.

I went abroad until the divorce case was tried. The details of the business, to me, were horrible. I had not realized that I should have to be in court, and I was swept by a fierce longing to stop the whole proceeding. I don't know even now how I got through the ordeal. Just think of that! A marriage of twenty years dissolved in fifteen minutes.

The next six months I decided to spend in the country. At the end of that time the decree *nisi* would be made absolute and—and Will would be free to marry. It's curious, but I could not imagine myself marrying again. I had plenty of friends, and one or two admirers. One man in particular, who had known me since I was a girl, asked me if I would have him as a husband, not once but many times.

Why couldn't I think of him as a husband?

Ah, there again you touch the vital point. It wasn't in me to start another marriage. He was a better man, a more charming man than Will, but I had given Will my young love, my hopes and my failings. I could not think of myself apart from him . . . And yet I had to do that. His people told me that he was going to marry Ruth, and already I felt that they were getting reconciled to the idea.

The decree was made absolute and Will and I were no more man and wife—in the legal sense, that is to say. My sister-in-law wrote that he and Ruth were to be married in the autumn.

I could not bear England after that. I decided that I would go to Italy. It had always been a dream of ours and I thought there I might find forgetfulness. Will was to be married in September, and it was at the end of August that I spent my last night in town.

I suppose at bottom I am sentimental, for though I fought against it all the day, I found myself towards evening in the neighborhood of our old flat where we had lived so happily together. My eyes were just a little bleared, and I almost ran into a man coming from the other direction.

I knew him even before he spoke to me. It was Will. I quite forgot he wasn't married to me any longer and impulsively gave him my hand. He smiled, a little foolishly.

"You're looking very young," he said. "Why—you might be the girl I used to know . . . I say, let's come and have some tea."

I had imagined our meeting over and over again, but it wasn't a bit like the real thing. We just sat and talked and laughed—yes, laughed about the most commonplace things. And then, suddenly, I remembered.

"I must go now," I said. "I've a lot of packing to do. I'm going abroad tomorrow."

He looked up quickly, as though he were disappointed.

"For long?"

"I—I don't know," I said. We sat there staring at each other. "And when are you getting married?" I said. There was a looking-glass in front of me, and I was proud to see how easily I smiled.

"I don't know. I—I want to talk to you, Mary. I *must* talk to you."

"We can't go to our flat," I answered. "Someone else has got that. And I don't really think there is anything to say."

But Will would not listen. He took me back to my hotel—and told me many things.

"It's funny," said he, "darn funny. But ever since you left me, I've been thinking more of you than—than of anyone else. The way you do your hair, that funny little trick you've got of laughing in the wrong place . . . We've had some good times, Mary."

I nodded. I could not trust myself to speak.

"It isn't easy to forget," he said. "I thought it would be . . . It's difficult, somehow, to start a new life."

That's all he said that evening . . . But he is joining me in Italy—at least, he asked if he might come and I didn't see any reason to say no. But if he comes he can't be going to marry—Ruth. Yes, I'm beginning to let myself hope. I think—I do think I'm going to be happy once again. It seems a long, long time since I thought that.

I smashed my marriage—yes . . .

Have I saved it?

I shall know in Italy.

The Old Countess



Illustrations by
Walt Louderback

The Story So Far:

THERE is no doubt that Jill and Richard Graham after five years of marriage were still lovers. They were perfect companions on his painting expeditions, on one of which they were now visiting the gorgeous valley of the Dordogne, in France.

Yet they were quite different in temperament. Jill was a simple English type, straightforward, steady, affectionate, rather gentle, fond of the out-of-doors and physical activity. Graham, besides being strikingly handsome and somewhat sardonic, was given to moods, sometimes strange and almost eerie. He seemed always to be reaching out spiritually for something he could never find, and he was fundamentally much more selfish than Jill.

Before they came to Buissac, on the Dordogne, the strength of the bond between them had never really been tested.

In Buissac they met by accident a strange old lady, the Comtesse de Lamouderie, a decayed gentlewoman who lived almost alone in an old house, the *manoir*, up a steep hill beyond a chestnut wood. She was very lonely and avidly sought the friendship of the Grahams, who were kind to her. Especially, with a sort of last flare-up of an emotion akin to love, was she fascinated by Graham. To him, however, she was attractive only as a picturesque object, like a Goya painting—he promised, indeed, to do her portrait; yet for all her racy wit and occasional charm, there was a certain somber, baleful and malicious quality about her which both he and Jill felt.

It was Marthe Ludérac, however, and not the old lady who was to have the most influence on their lives. Marthe's mother was buried near the chestnut wood below the *manoir*; and on first seeing that name on a grave, Graham had had a strange presage regarding it. To Jill too it seemed of some especial significance.

They did not meet Marthe until the following spring, when they returned to Buissac, Graham to do the old lady's portrait. Marthe, the latter said, was her landlady and occasionally her companion. To Graham, on first meeting her casually at the *manoir*, Marthe seemed to have an elusive quality; dressed all in black, delicately beautiful, yet with an undercurrent of peasant sturdiness, he thought of her first as a remote Saint Cecilia; her face floated before him like a flame.

If Graham was thus fascinated by Marthe, Jill was equally fascinated in a different way. Even before they met, learning that Marthe had sacrificed her girlhood to the care of a mad woman, her mother, Jill had been attracted to her. When they met, Jill felt an odd and deep friendship. They discovered in one another a passion for nature, for birds and animals; and Jill found in Marthe an almost unearthly gentleness, combined with passionate force. But Marthe had all her life been lonely, and the shadow of tragedy seemed to go by her side.

Her impression on Jill, and her impression on Graham, both were strengthened during an evening they spent at the *manoir*, when Marthe, who was a professional musician, played on the harp. She played, partly, from Gluck's "Orpheus and Eurydice." To Graham, Marthe seemed more than ever elusive and beckoning, like the lost Eurydice herself, calling Orpheus in Hades; to Jill, she seemed to possess some celestial secret of happiness, like the music she played.

Graham determined to come to the *manoir* to paint the old lady while Marthe was present. Jill determined to make Marthe a closer friend. And sensing this attraction, Madame de Lamouderie showed signs of a smoldering jealousy.

By *Anne Douglas Sedgwick*

Who Wrote "The Little French Girl"

A Novel of 3 Types of LOVE



¶ *"Now I can turn and look at her," thought Graham. But how intolerable, for him and Mlle. Ludérac, if the old lady found him so engaged!*

SO, NEXT morning, Graham walked up to the *manoir*, It was still raining heavily and the weather gave to his change of program a further relevancy. Impossible, in any case, to work out of doors today.

As he went, his coat turned up about his ears, his hands in his pockets, his eyes downcast, it was over the relevant aspects of his present undertaking that his mind was moving; lightly, as it were, and with careful footsteps. It was all absolutely relevant. It had been as easy to show frankness to Jill as to show duplicity to the old lady. He had said to Jill last night that he wanted to see something more of Mademoiselle Ludérac and Jill had completely understood, completely approved. Jill, it might even be said, urged him on. She wanted him, most insistently wanted him, to know and appreciate Mademoiselle Ludérac. So that was all right, thought Graham, turning off the highroad at the cemetery wall and beginning the steep ascent among the chestnut forests.

The grave, dark forest, its vistas swept by slanting rain, pitched his thoughts in a different key and set them to a different tempo. They went more heavily; they found their way; and their way was not always clear to find. But was not that all that his present enterprise really came to? He wanted to see Mademoiselle Ludérac. For he could never see her; never in the sense of possessing his vision; this was the lack, the failure, that urged him on. There, among the rain-swept vistas, he stopped and pondered.

No; he could not see her face. To his potent, creative memory, the experience was a new one. Mademoiselle Ludérac was an aspect of nature and never before had nature evaded him.

When he tried to see her, all that came clearly were her hands. It was as if her hands, helplessly, had allowed themselves to be mastered by his vision.

He could see them placing the daffodils; he could see them laid in mastery upon the harp; taking curious heraldic attitudes when thumb and little finger plucked at difficult chords; dissolved, while the arpeggios flowed from under them, into multiplied delicacies, or laid flat upon the strings, with a sudden mysterious urgency, to hush their golden whispering.

Why could he not see her face? He knew what it was like; accurately. He could have catalogued it; but he could not see it. Was it because of her eyes that he could not see her? When he looked at her, they met his eyes and gave him nothing; nothing; not even retreat; not even denial. The nature he summoned was passive; it yielded itself up to his quest. Mademoiselle Ludérac's eyes, though they neither retreated nor denied, met his force with an equal potency.

But not only the opposing forces of her soul had thus baffled and blinded his memory. The music had been there last night and he could not listen when he saw, or see while he listened. With a sense of relief, yet of haste, of pursuit, his thought

plunged down another labyrinth. It had been the music, then, rather than her eyes. It was slight, it was thin, that music for Eurydice, but as he had listened it had brought back an old anguish.

What was this sense of a lack in things that had haunted him since boyhood? This thirst for the reality under the appearance? Again and again he had evoked from enigmatic earth her essential harmonies, only to find when, in weariness and joy, he sought to grasp an abiding answer, that he had only evoked a deeper enigma. For the beauty born of nature and spirit itself was dumb. Beauty arose before him; but her finger was on her lips. He was no Orpheus; he lamented no lost Eurydice. He felt, he sought; but he had never seen her.

But where was his thought now leading him? Graham felt himself turn back. And, as so often in his life, it was to Jill he turned. Dear Jill. Bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; innocent earth; earth without its enigma. He never sought, since he had never needed Jill. She was there too completely; his child, his playmate, his companion. With Jill he was at one with nature; with all that had been happy in his childhood. That was his good fortune; but it had nothing to do with the self beneath appearance. It was an Eurydice that self needed; the habitant of another, and a deeper world; she who knew the secrets of the grave and the secrets—must it not be so?—of Elysium; of the eternal beauty that drew life on towards a perpetual contemplation.

"But what am I thinking of now?" said Graham to himself as he saw suddenly that the sycamores of the *manoir* were below him. "In heaven's name let me rid myself of this folly. It's as if I were bewitched," he thought. "And I'm not going, at this time of my life, to confuse the *ewig-weibliche* with the Platonic forms!"

Though he had come so slowly—and hours, to his apprehension, seemed to have passed since he had said good-by to Jill—the *manoir* clock was only striking eleven when Joseph let him in. He made some affable remark about the bad weather as Joseph helped him off with his coat, but answering never a word, Joseph only bowed his head in grave assent.

Madame de Lamouderie was the first object that met his eye on entering the drawing-room. She sat in readiness, in her *bergère*, her lips rouged, her cheeks powdered, her mantilla on her head; and his easel was in place and the portrait was upon it. But though she was ready, she showed no sparkle. She was grave, and almost distant.

"This is terrible weather, is it not?" she said, giving him her hand. "It is brave of you indeed to venture out—Madame Graham is well?"

"Yes, Jill's always well."

"You are wise to cherish her."

"I don't cherish her!" laughed Graham. "You might as well talk of cherishing an oak-tree!"

"To me the simile she suggests is rather that of a rose."

"Oh, I only spoke hygienically," said Graham, all good humor. "If it comes to esthetic analogies I can match you, I feel sure."

"I thought that, esthetically, Madame Graham did not ' terest you. I had even feared that you might look upon her only as a peach."

GRAHAM, at that, shot a glance at his old friend, and it conveyed a warning. She changed the subject.

"We are all in readiness for you, you see. Marthe will be here directly. She is engaged, I think, in dusting my room. But she does not forget our hour. Ah, here she is," and Graham, turning, saw Mademoiselle Ludérac entering.

She was in black; as always. It was for that, perhaps, that she had always the peasant look. All that he saw of her was that she was in black and that she bowed her head in answer to his murmured greeting.

"Have you any choice of a book?" asked Madame de Lamouderie, as he turned again to his easel, and he was aware that she observed maliciously something awkward in his demeanor. "Marthe is ready to read us anything that we may choose. Are you not, Marthe?"

Mademoiselle Ludérac made no reply to this question, conceiving probably that it required none.

"But I've nothing to do with the reading," said Graham. "It must be your choice. Or perhaps I may rely on Mademoiselle Ludérac to choose something that will absorb and delight you." Graham looked towards the young woman.

"Ah, Marthe is my good angel, but she is not a magician," said the old lady, who, evidently, was bent on making him feel her mood a bitter one. "There is no book written that could absorb or delight me. A passing diversion; that is alone possible. What have you, Marthe?"

Mademoiselle Ludérac was standing before a row of books set side by side on the table in the alcove. "Shall we go on with '*La Colline Inspirée*'?" she inquired.

"Ah, *non;* I weary of that Barrès! He is too intellectual. Distinguished, but lifeless. I like people, not localities; it is always localities, or theories, he gives us."

At her distance, Graham saw that Mademoiselle Ludérac slightly smiled. The old lady's humor did not flourish in an unappreciative atmosphere.

"The new François Mauriac?"

"Ah, *non, par exemple!*" Madame de Lamouderie rejected the suggestion with even more emphasis. "He is indeed of a dreariness, that young man! He is like hot dust in the mouth. One imagines that one has found a tale of passion, of flesh and blood passion; and lo—before one knows where one is, all is tombs and dust and penitence! I do not relish these young Catholics. I am indeed a *diable dans leur bénitier!*" The old lady laughed grimly.

"You said the other day that you would like to hear 'Dominique' again." Mademoiselle Ludérac spoke and turned her head to glance at Madame de Lamouderie.

"I've never read 'Dominique,'" said Graham. "But it provides you, surely, with no salt or spice."

"You must not take me *au pied de la lettre*, Monsieur," rejoined the old lady with her stately bitterness. "My spices and salts would seem very insipid to your young palate!" and once again she laughed, very grimly.

GRAHAM, in spite of his devouring preoccupation, was amused by her ill humor and, as his eyes now met hers, they showed so infectious a spark of mirth that, helplessly, Madame de Lamouderie smiled back at him.

"Do let us have 'Dominique,'" he said.

"Let us have 'Dominique,' Marthe," the old lady echoed.

Mademoiselle Ludérac, her book in her hand, passed behind Graham to seat herself at the window and as she went a low thud-thud, from the hearth, drew his attention to the old dog lying there, the black and white dog that he and Jill had seen on their first visit to the *manoir*. He was of a nondescript breed, half spaniel, half retriever, with a broad silky head, laid flatly on his paws, and large dim eyes which followed Mademoiselle Ludérac to her place and dwelt upon her with devout, contented passion. He evidently could still see his adored mistress and she must have made some answering gesture of love, for the contentment deepened and again the tail thudded heavily.

"What a charming dog," said Graham, mixing his *grisaille* on his palette.

"He is Marthe's dog," said the old lady. "She has had him for many years. She is, as you may observe, the center of his life; but to me he is very kind when we are alone together in the winter, *n'est-ce pas*, Médor?" and the old lady smiled at the dog, who, without moving his head, turned his eyes on her and once more, gently, thudded his tail, though with a lessened emphasis.

"Médor? He couldn't be anything but Médor, could he? Is he one of Mademoiselle Ludérac's rescued animals?" Graham inquired. It was odd to speak of her as if she were not present. But it would, he felt, be even more odd to speak to her.

"Yes. She rescued him. He was tied up, day and night, at a farm. She used to go and see him; and sit with him. It touched the people's hearts perhaps. At all events they got another dog they liked better and Médor was sold to Marthe."

Médor, hearing that he attracted so much attention, could remain passive no longer and, with a low, blissful grumbling, he rose and went slowly and stiffly across to where his mistress sat.

"*Là, mon chéri; là, mon bon chien,*" Graham heard her whispering, while she fondled Médor's head. "*Couche-toi; sois-tranquil.* You will not be as comfortable as by the fire."

At this Graham got up, took the hearth-rug and laid it beside Mademoiselle Ludérac. "So that Médor can be happy body and soul," he commented and, not looking at him, her eyes on Médor, she murmured:

"*Vous êtes trop aimable.*"

"Well, now that Médor is settled, shall we read, since it is for the reading that Monsieur Graham is come?" said Madame de Lamouderie, who had observed this little scene with not unsympathetic eyes.

Graham made no protest. He sat down again at his easel and behind him Mademoiselle Ludérac began to read. Her



¶ *"Madame de Lamouderie and I met through Médor. She used to pat Médor's head and I felt she was sorry for me," said Marthe.*

voice was calm and clear. The slow, silver rhythms of "Dominique" circled through his consciousness and made him think of Gluck's Elysian fields. It was emotion not even recollected in tranquillity; or did not the slow pulse of memory beat softly beneath the current, presaging resuscitation? Half hypnotized, he listened, and met the ambiguous stare of the mournful old owl perched there before him. He held himself steady before Madame de Lamouderie. His mind was watchful and the alertness served his work. Steadily, accurately, his hand obeyed the bidding of his will.

"And now you may rest and we may talk," he said at the end of a half-hour.

Mademoiselle Ludérac rose and said that she would take ten minutes for her lamps. Médor followed her out of the room, and Graham and his old friend were left alone together.

Madame de Lamouderie showed no change of expression.

She turned her eyes on the weather and remarked that they would soon be threatened by floods if the rain continued.

"I should like to see a flood, with corpses," Graham smiled at her, leaning back and stretching his arms.

"Ah." The old lady continued to gaze out of the window. "You see life, I am aware, as a banquet for yourself. Other people's tragedies are your condiments."

"No, no; not at all," Graham gently laughed. "I am like you. I enjoy drama, I enjoy being in drama; not only observing it."

This made her look at him. "Yes; you enjoy drama," she repeated, eying him. "Whether that is like me I do not know. You enjoy danger. You enjoy playing with fire."

"True." Graham, his hands now locked behind his head, nodded at her. "Fire is a delicious element."

"I have seen a great deal of life," the old lady went on, after they had contemplated each other for a moment. "I have known a great many men, and I may tell you that those who play with fire always burn their fingers."

"As mine are now being burned by you, you mean?" Graham cheerfully inquired. "I gladly pay the price. The game is worth the candle."

"I do not burn you," the old lady continued, ignoring his levity. "I do not even freeze you. I am your friend. I merely offer you a little cold water."

"But why? I'm not fire!" laughed Graham. "You mustn't judge me by all those ardent princes and diplomats of your youth! I'm an essentially stolid Britisher." But he was not at ease. There was in the old lady's unexpected impersonality a note of genuineness that disturbed him.

"Stolid! Oh, no; you are not stolid!" the old lady returned with open mockery. "Nor are you a mystic visionary. It is not the apparition of a Saint Cecilia you wait for, a Saint Cecilia among the pots and pans and dusters! You are fire; and if you choose to run underground, do not imagine that I do not detect you!"

Graham kept his countenance with difficulty, for he was indeed confounded. "You know," he warned her, trying to maintain a rallying tone, "if you won't be the kind of Goya I want you to be, you'll have to be another kind. Interesting, too; very; but not nearly so pleasing from your point of view, I'm sure. You are delightful in this mood, perfectly delightful; to me. But you won't delight yourself when you see what I shall have to make of you."

"Make of me what you will, Monsieur. I am at your service. The sinner, by all means, after the saint. I do not care for saints. *Des gens forts louches;* that is what I suspect them of being. Shall we go on with our work? Marthe!" called the old lady.

"But it's a jocund sinner I want; not a tragic one," said Graham, and he smiled at her. "Come, come; we are friends, as you say. You are not going to be a menacing sky to me; not a Cassandra; but my merry Sphinx of the hillside. Come; shall we really get to work?"

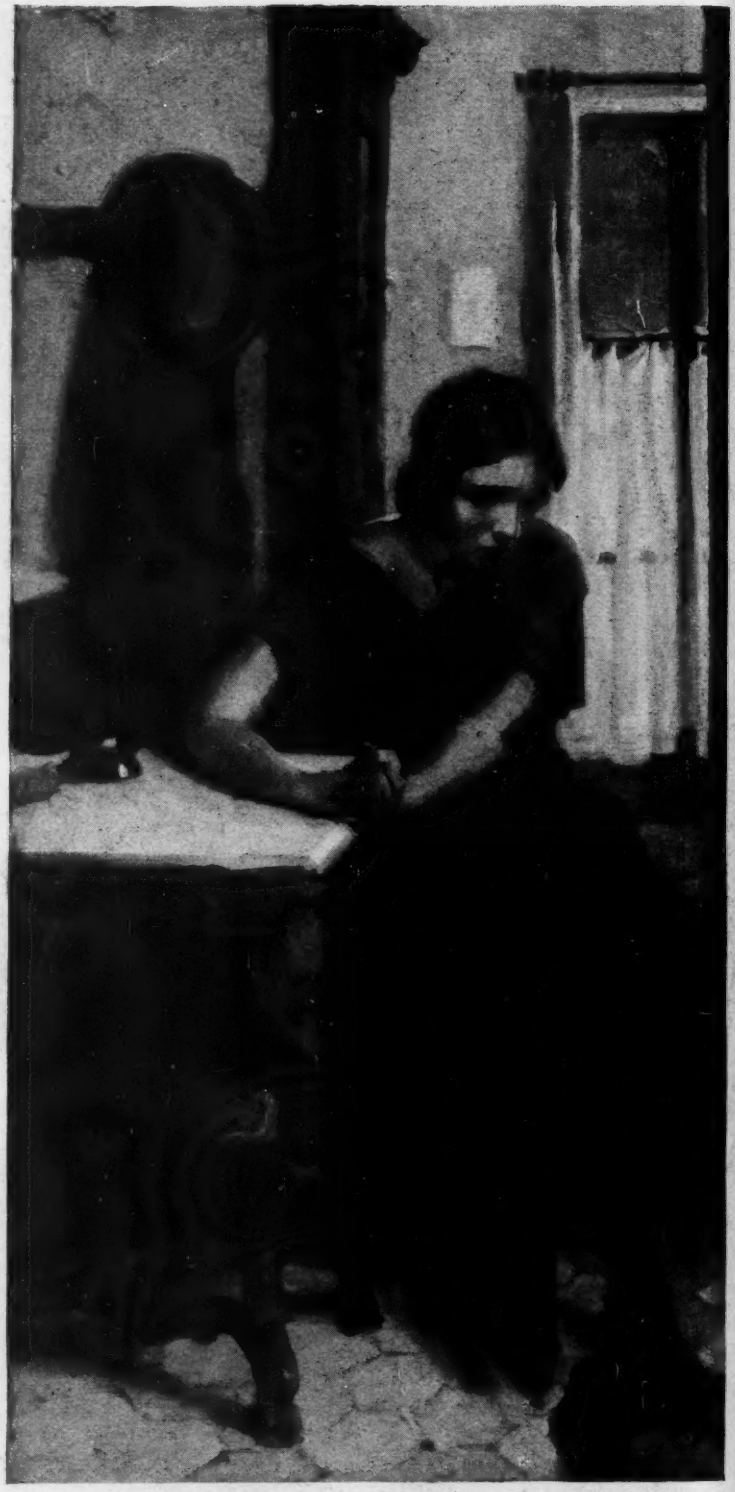
"By all means. Marthe!" She called again, and now Mademoiselle Ludérac entered.

"What do you think of my sketch, Mademoiselle?" Graham asked, with resolution, as she passed behind his chair. To speak to her in this easy tone was to demonstrate to the old lady that he did not run underground.

She paused there, behind him. Solitudes; solitudes where violets grew. The breath of lonely springtide woods seemed wafted to him from her presence.

"Do I look a cheerful or a tragic sinner, Marthe?" the old lady inquired.

Mademoiselle Ludérac considered. "The portrait is very interesting; but it does not flatter you," she said.



¶ *"There is something you should know," Marthe said*

"And why should it flatter me? Monsieur Graham is no flatterer. Do you like it? That is the point."

"I do not care so much for the smile. But the eyes I like, very much."

"Are they eyes that, in youth, could have stirred men's hearts? Can you tell me that?"

Graham saw that Mademoiselle Ludérac smiled at her old friend. "*Mais oui, mais oui,*" she answered. "And much more besides."

"I ask for no more," said the old lady.

"And what is wrong with the smile?" asked Graham.



to Jill. "Not to another soul have I ever spoken of my life. But I cannot defend myself against you."

The moment of arrest that always followed any direct approach he ventured upon, made itself felt; but she found a full reply. "If it could be the smile she gave to Médor?"

"Ah; but she isn't looking at Médor, you must remember; she is looking at me," said Graham. "I should ask nothing better than that she should look at me as she looks at Médor!"

"Médor has no secrets!" the old lady rejoined and the sparkle of challenge shot from her eyes as they met his smile. "Imitate Médor, and you shall be looked at as he is looked at!" She challenged him; but she was mollified, if ever so little.

Graham then painted, Mademoiselle Ludérac read and, outside, the desperate day dashed itself against the window-panes. On his rug Médor, with a drowsy sigh, stretched himself to deeper slumbers, and presently Graham saw that the great eyes before him were closing. Tick-tock, he heard the old clock in the hall. The silver rhythms of "Dominique" flowed on; but Madame de Lamouderie had fallen asleep.

Graham continued to paint for a little while. He touched soft pallor on the folded hands and drew a line of rose along the lips. Then his hand was still. The reading paused; continued, paused again, and then ceased. Silence flowed around them. All the world was sleeping. "Now I can turn (*Continued on page 147*)

By O. O. McIntyre

Hello, Sucker!

An Inside Story of Night Life in New York

TO MEET the very best people in New York these days you must stay up all night. The dinner hour has moved up to ten o'clock. Nobody thinks of going anywhere before midnight and to miss a dawn sandwich at Reuben's is a real social *gaucherie*.

It is comparable to being unable socially to greet with a "Hello, Tex!" that indomitable queen of night life, Texas Guinan —the Girl Everybody Knows. If you are one of her familiars, she greets you gaily and blandly with the title of this article.

These dazzling and glorified night clubs which have, lily-like, lifted their heads in the Broadway bog have a drawing power that is nothing short of astounding.

They draw the dilettanti and imperious, languid ladies from the "Gold Coast" fringing Park Avenue. They bring the stage and screen stars who think they are important and who are gazed upon by the simple yokelry who have no idea who they are.

They have drained the East Side cellars of their gunmen, drug addicts and other human fungi and this malevolent brood now flowers in tuxedoed elegance at ringside tables.

The why of the night club is one of the most amazing of the Manhattan enigmas. Beyond the silken ropes of their shadowy entrances the most confirmed sucker cannot faintly hope for an even break.

There are a pitifully few honest clubs, of course, but the overwhelming majority are mere ornate gyp palaces run by bootleggers or former Raines Law hotel bell-hops. Perhaps they are a tribute to the late "Diamond Jim" Brady's celebrated *mot:* "There's fun being a sucker, if you can afford it."

No one can visit the average night club without branding himself as a sucker. He may think he is having a good time but he is a sucker just the same. And plenty!

He pays from twenty to thirty dollars for a quart of bicarbonated cider wine costing fifty-eight cents and has to serve it himself. This is the merry conceit to give him the idea he is drinking real wine and breaking a law.

He pays from one to two dollars for a shot of illicit hooch that has left many victims crumpled up in agony a few hours later.

He pays a cover charge that would buy him a good seat at a first-class Broadway show to hear a barrage of heavy jokes from an imitation Balieff. He pays a triple price for a box of cigarets and gives the girl a quarter. He sits at a cramped table in the atmosphere of stale smoke, sour wine and woolly-witted befuddlement to watch a hostess introduce Harry K. Thaw or some other hero of the slippery first page.

He watches anemic, scantily dressed and pathetic little girls prance about ogling some aged and amative decadent. He sees some former movie star like a frail fever-eyed ghost in a far-off corner dying—dying happily of cocaine.

He sees those young and beautiful girls sitting opposite those hawk-nosed libidinous vultures at tables that are moist and ringed from the imprint of many glasses. Girls flushed with what they think is the verve and *élan* of an exciting night life and who will soon be bits of wreckage in the destroying storm!

He must buy thirty-cent dolls for five-dollar bills from provocative ladies who linger at his table. He must shuck off a golden note from the vanishing roll for the whispering baritone or tubercular tenor who croons at his side.

He must pay from twenty-five to fifty cents for the casual service of checking his hat or run the risk of being insulted. He must pay $1.25 for a razor-thin sandwich or a Welsh rarebit fashioned of stale glue. He must be a sucker to the limit or he will never be welcome there again.

He sees hostesses who "feature" current sweethearts at their guest of honor tables. He sees a vice-sodden roué salt his drink with tears as some performer renders throatily Dowson's:

"I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion!"

He sees Rialto mummers long out of work pay their last dollar for a fleeting moment in the blazing lights. He sees eager-eyed collegiates with necks of gin bottles protruding from dinner jackets. He sees vibrant young flappers a bit disheveled and flushed. Irrepressible youth dancing down the primrose path to the piping of jazz flutes!

If this be entertainment—make the most of it. Yet it has attracted New York as it has never been attracted before. It has nightly packed some 500 night clubs from the lust-hot cellars of Harlem's Black Belt to the baroque, made-over dwellings of Greenwich Village.

There is no real gaiety. Just a few set smiles more like a shuddery grimace—but never a hearty laugh. So there he sits—the sucker! Trying to provoke a little beauty out of stark ugliness and conscious that morning will bring "a headache made for a horse."

Jewels glitter around aristocratic necks. Captains of industry sit starchly stiff wondering what their boards of directors would think. While at other tables furtive men and women are hatching in whispers blackmail, hold-ups and often murder.

Built on deceit, the supper club seems to thrive on deceit. *Par exemple!* In a certain club where a man enters wearing a red rose in his lapel and accompanied by a lady he will be treated as an utter stranger.

The red rose is a signal the lady is his wife. She may have insisted on being brought there and he doesn't want any of the usual easy familiarity to spring up as though he might be a regular patron.

There are also "suspicion tables." These are for two, but have four chairs so in case the gentleman and his lady for the evening are embarrassed by some unwelcome presence two male "house ringers" may sit there and thus give the impression the gentleman is merely one of a party of four.

With one exception—the old Palais Royal—no spacious night haunt has ever prospered in New York. Intimacy is the motif. To keep filling the postage-stamp dance floors with tables until there is no room left for dancing is a procedure that will bring crowds back. The reason is obvious. Mrs. Eppis wants to yell down her Bronx dumb-waiter the next morning that she sat next to Vincent Astor last night at the Club Galumph.

MOST of the prosperous clubs are in old unrented buildings or abandoned garages along out-of-the-way streets. They are usually in a neighborhood of laundries, warehouses or cheap stores. Fortunes are quickly made. The proprietors must work fast, for hovering over them always is the avenging hand of the law. That is where the sucker comes in to pay and pay and pay. And he does, thank you.

The real flare of night life is between four and five A. M. when the "best people" drop in. It is doubtless true that in some of the popular places a more brilliant gathering could not be collected under one roof.

One is likely to see at close quarters Mayor Walker, Marilyn Miller, Paul Whiteman, Mary Garden, the Irving Berlins, Flo Ziegfeld, the lugubrious Dreiser. Oh, lots of folks!

They sit about in a jaded way, as though in a supreme effort to stifle the collective yawn.

And lo! the poor sucker sits tremulously waiting afraid to ask for his check, knowing it will be added with a bandit's split lead-pencil and that if he complains he will be unwelcome the next time. Night clubs treat suckers that way, for they like it and come back for more.

But in the end he settles his score, appreciating the grim humor of the wit who cried "Waiter, bring me my check and a fright wig!" So he retrieves his hat and stick, lurches out to the entrance where a carriage starter holds an umbrella over the dry sidewalk and fairly rushes him to a taxi.

And the starter, feeling the extra fee in his palm for protecting a patron from an imaginary rain, brightens at his own resourcefulness, smiles at the departing guest and the brilliant morning sun.



Photograph by DeMirjian

¶ *The Girl Everybody Knows*



Across the Rio Grande

ONE day in the month of May this young fellow Cheyenne rode into San Antonio with his battered hat on the back of his head and the blazing devil of unrest abiding in his bold dark eyes. There, in the old plaza that warm afternoon, he fell in with another soft-voiced rowdy of the saddle who said his name was Brazos.

"I'm going to take a whirl at wet hosses," this adventurer announced after their acquaintance had been ripening for two hours or so in a bar. "Why don't you throw in with me?"

"Never heard tell of 'em," Cheyenne confessed. "Why are they wet?"

"Because you swim 'em acrost the Rio Grande," the other explained. "You run 'em off of them big *haciendas* down in Chihuahua. Sometimes the vaqueros think you're Apaches, but they never put up much of a fight."

Cheyenne signaled the bartender to return the whisky bottle and considered briefly. He had been knocking about in southern Texas long enough to absorb the local code of morals which tolerated many things south of the line because of the Alamo's bitter memory; so such rough-and-ready scruples as he cherished concerning honor were not bothering him.

"How about sellin' 'em?" he asked at length.

"I know some cow-men here in San Antonio," Brazos replied when he had filled his glass, "who'll pay twenty-five dollars a head anywhere on this side of the river. Here's how."

"How." Cheyenne swallowed his whisky. "All right. I'll go you."

So, on that day in May, Cheyenne went into the business of wet horses, which would have been called by a harsher name had it been carried on north of the Rio Grande. And for some months, in company with Brazos and four or five others of the same reckless breed, he violated the laws of nations by looting and armed violence. Then, on an evening in the fervent month of August, he went out of business more abruptly than he had gone in.

The end of this wild chapter in his youth came in a little town of mud-colored adobes at the foot of some bleak dry mountains down Saltillo way. There were six in the band and they had been trying to break some of the monte games which were always running in the plaza after dusk. Now, as they were leading their ponies forth from the corral where they had been put up during the visit, they discovered that the narrow street, which had been deserted when they entered the pen, was occupied by a platoon of ragged soldiers, drawn up to command the gateway.

The moments which followed were filled to overflowing with

Romance by Frederick R. Bechdolt

Illustrations by
Herbert M. Stoops



¶ *The moments which followed were filled to overflowing for Cheyenne and Brazos, and Cheyenne went out of business more abruptly than he went in.*

swift action. Chief among the impressions which Cheyenne retained were the smell of burning powder, the irregular rattle of firing at close range, the scuffle of hoofs and the keen desire to get near enough to his frightened horse to seize the saddle horn. Four shots were gone from his revolver by the time he finally succeeded in mounting. While he was racing down the block he became conscious of a rider coming up beside him. It was Brazos, and he was swaying in the saddle like a drunken man.

Cheyenne reined over until his leg was pressing the flank of the other pony and passed his arm around his companion's sagging shoulders. So they rode out of the village with the bullets droning above their heads; and during the next three weeks Cheyenne devoted his energies to doctoring the hole which a Mexican slug had left in Brazos's lungs and dodging soldiers in the arid mountains. By the time they were able to travel with any kind of speed it was evident that the army was still taking an active interest in their affairs; and on the night when they swam their horses across the Rio Grande, a company of cavalry were so close behind them that they could hear the rattle of the stirrup-leathers.

There was no doubt about it; the wet-horse project was a thing of the past. Brazos said as much while they were waiting for word of their companions in San Antonio.

"But I know of something else that beats it all to blazes," he went on hopefully. "These smugglers that come acrost the line to buy goods, with every mule in their pack-trains loaded down with 'dobe dollars."

Somehow or other, the idea did not have the same appeal to Cheyenne as its predecessor. There seemed to him—in spite of his free-and-easy code of morals—to be a difference between wet horses and dry silver dollars. However, he did not mention that. He merely shook his head.

"I reckon I'll be shovin' on," he said. "I want to see more country."

So they parted with mutual good feeling and Cheyenne rode on into the West, to see more country—and new faces.

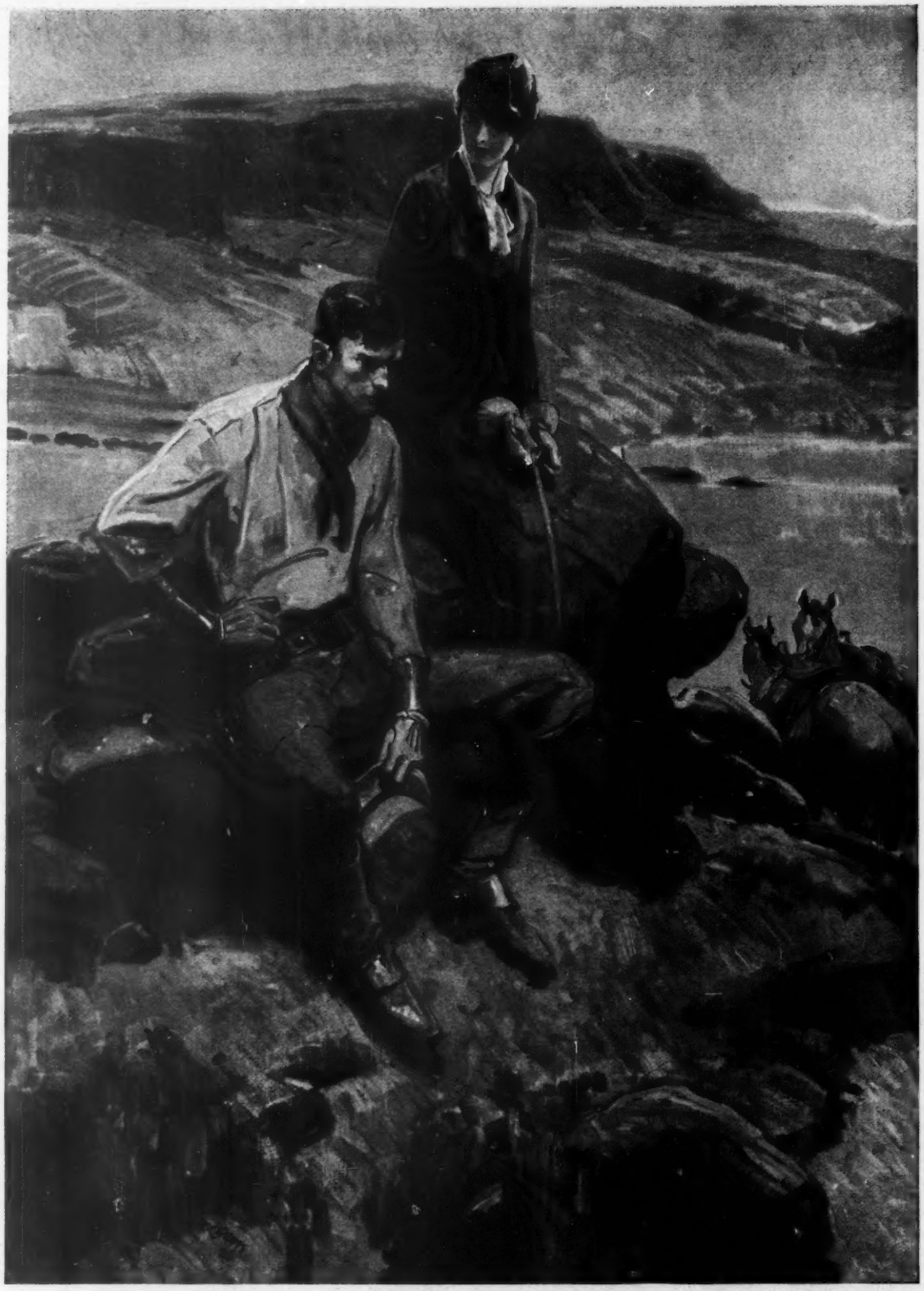
In Tombstone, on a summer morning five years afterward, Bill Savage's young wife and her sister Molly were setting forth reluctantly for the home ranch down on the lonely border. Pretty women were scarce in the raw camp and there was no lack of presentable mining engineers, to say nothing of army officers from Fort Huachuca; so their week's visit had been a pleasant one. But their reluctance to depart had nothing to do with the good times which they were leaving behind them. In those days, when the smoke of Apache signal-fires was a frequent sight among the ragged mountains and when hard eyed outlaws were riding unhindered over the wide flats, the road to Bill Savage's home ranch was not the safest route in the world. And the cowboy who was to have been their guard had failed to put in an appearance.

"I was particular when that man, Bush Reddy, showed up last night, to tell him he must be on hand by six this morning." Young Mrs. Savage cast a final glance toward Allen Street where the saloons were, and sighed. "It's eight now. We can't wait any longer." She picked up the reins.

"I wish Bill had sent Cheyenne," Molly remarked as the buckboard was rattling down the wide street. There was a vividness in Molly's beauty at all times, but the color in her cheeks was higher than usual now. Her sister noted this and the glow that had come into her eyes.

"If we don't get home tonight," she declared quietly, ignoring the remark, "Bill will think something has happened and he'll have the men out looking for us. Anyway, perhaps Bush will catch up with us."

But the missing escort had no idea of catching up with them



"Me, I have rode wild and had my fling, as the saying is," Cheyenne said to Molly. "Yet there was nothing, after all, that I'm ashamed of."

that day—in fact, he had no ideas on any subject whatever at the time, having succumbed to more than his share of Allen Street whisky some hours before. And the two sisters were destined to make the journey without him.

Having been in southeastern Arizona for a year, Mrs. Savage was beginning to look upon emergencies as the rule of life. As for Molly, she had seen enough of wild incident since she had left home in eastern Texas last spring, to make this mishap seem unworthy of worrying over.

So neither of them indulged in forebodings during the long drive southward; and the usual rumor of the Apaches being out, which they heard at the Double Dobe ranch, failed to disturb them very much. But when one of the team went lame at the Blackwater flats, and the dusk began to creep upon them more

than twenty miles from home, the background of experience, which had kept them from useless fears before, revealed to them the ugly possibilities ahead of them. Here, in the heart of No Man's Land, where naked savages and the renegades of two nations used to prey on one another, was no place for travelers after nightfall.

There was no more cheerful talk between them and Molly sat with lips compressed, holding on her lap a single-action revolver; while Mrs. Savage clenched the reins and tried to look ahead into the darkness. By the time they were going down the grade to Silver Creek only the eroded summits of some mountains off to the right were visible against the sky-line. Now and again the lame horse stumbled and the rattling of the wheels grew louder with the increasing roughness of the road.

"Well, there's one consolation," Molly said; "Bill will get rid of Bush Reddy when he hears of this."

"I never liked that man, myself," her sister answered. "I knew by the look of him he wasn't trustworthy."

They were in the creek bed now; the buckboard lurched as the wheels passed over a large boulder. The two women fell silent again, wondering whether those were moving forms out there where the brittle shrubs were rustling in the night breeze, or merely figments of the imagination. The iron tires made weird noises on the stones. A quarter of a mile or so ahead, off on the mesa, a little flame was twisting lazily. Mrs. Savage pulled up the team.

"What do you think it is?" Molly whispered.

"Hush, dear. Camp-fire, the chances are. But you can't tell."

The bit of light subsided behind a shadow, then it rose into sight again. It might have been—as she had said—a camp-fire; but there had been times on this same road when such a light had come from the charred remnants of a wagon after the Apaches had finished amusing themselves with the luckless driver. So the two women sat frozen to silence, hoping for the night to reveal to them some sign of what it kept in hidin Then there came a rattle of loose stones close by and Moll pointed the revolver at a blurred shape which had emerged from the surrounding darkness.

"You needn't shoot," the apparition said.

Molly lowered the hammer and dropped the six-shooter into her lap.

"Cheyenne!" Her voice was vibrant and there was something deeper than relief in it.

"Thank Heaven!" Mrs. Savage said. "I never was so glad to see one of the men."

"There's four of the boys down there, holdin' a bunch of cows till mornin'." He came a step closer and laid his hand upon the wheel. "I thought Bill had sent Bush Reddy to town after you."

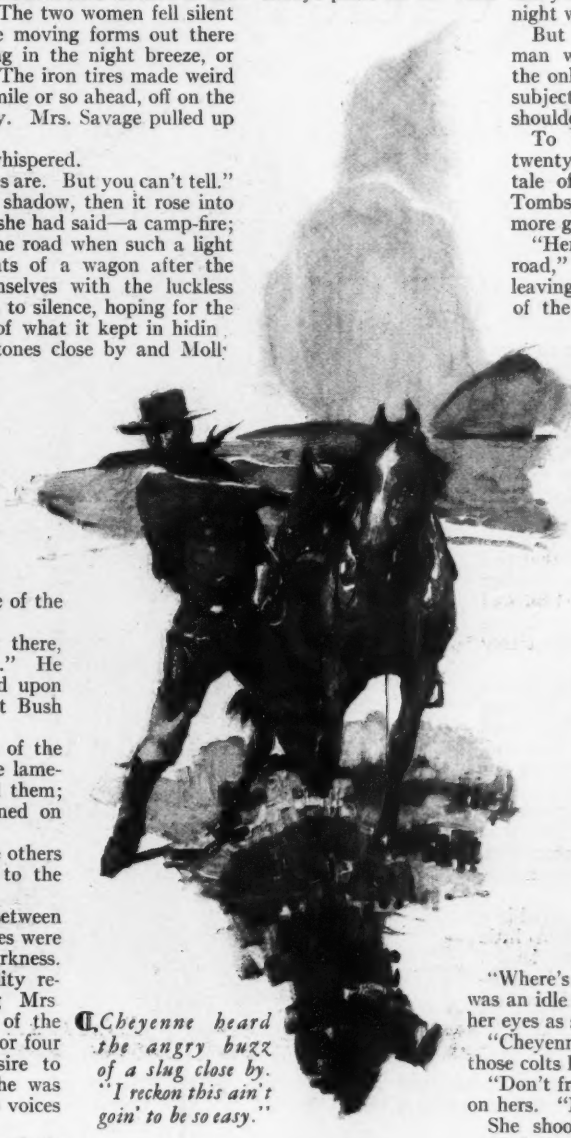
It was Mrs. Savage who told him of the cowboy's failure to appear and of the lameness of the horse, which had delayed them; but while she spoke his eyes remained on Molly.

"If you'll wait here till I can let the others know," he said, "I'll drive you on to the ranch."

Five minutes later he was seated between them holding the reins and the horses were plodding onward through the darkness. Now, with the weight of responsibility removed from her shoulders, young Mrs Savage began to feel the weariness of the long journey. During the next three or four miles she struggled against the desire to sleep and the last thing of which she was conscious was the murmur of the two voices beside her.

They were traveling across the malpais flats, ten miles from home, when she awakened with a sudden sense of danger.

Tall clumps of mesquite lined the road on either side, dense blots of blackness in the night. Somewhere among them she heard the noise of rapid hoof beats coming toward the road. The sound grew louder and the team shied violently. The bushes cracked and she saw a horse and rider bursting through the gloom. They came to an abrupt halt, blocking the wagon track.



Cheyenne heard the angry buzz of a slug close by. "I reckon this ain't goin' to be so easy."

Then Molly whispered, "That man has a gun in his hand!"

And Cheyenne answered quietly, "So have I."

The calmness in his voice was as reassuring as the sight of the weapon which he was holding. Mrs. Savage saw its muzzle pointing toward the rider. And the rider saw it, too, for when she looked up again, he was reining off into the shadows.

"I reckon," Cheyenne said, "it was some line dodger huntin' for a little easy money." He pulled the team back into the road and thereafter the journey continued without further interruption. Before midnight Mrs. Savage was telling the story of their adventures to her husband in the ranch-house living-room. When she came to the incident of the horseman she happened to glance at her younger sister.

"There's something on yo'r mind, Sweet," Bill Savage told her afterward in their own room.

"It's Molly," she replied. "You don't suppose she'd be foolish enough to take Cheyenne too seriously, do you, Bill? I've noticed when she wants anything done by the men, he is the one she always picks for it. And—did you see the way she looked tonight when I was talking of him?"

But her husband was a stingy man when it came to words and the only comment he offered on the subject was a shrug of his burly shoulders.

To Bush Reddy, who rode in twenty-four hours later with a wild tale of having been drugged in a Tombstone saloon, he was a little more generous of speech.

"Here's yo'r pay. Now hit the road," he said and turned away, leaving the discharged hand to learn of the dangers which had befallen the two women from the cowboys, who took good pains to let the story lose nothing by their recital. Some men would have cherished the grudge of the lost job against their employer, but Bill Savage was not a wholesome person to pick for an enemy, and so Bush Reddy rode back to Tombstone nursing a grievance against Cheyenne.

August went by, and September. October was well along, the month when the wind dies and the sun grows gentle and all the land along the border falls under a golden spell. On an enchanted evening when the long malpais flats under the mesa were throbbing in the glow of the sunset and the purple summits of the Sierra Madre were beginning to turn black against the sky, Bill Savage found his wife sitting on the veranda and drew up his chair beside her.

"Where's Molly gone?" The question was an idle one, but he saw the worry in her eyes as she answered:

"Cheyenne took her for a drive—with those colts he's been breaking."

"Don't fret, Sweet." He laid his hand on hers. "He'll handle 'em all right."

She shook her head.

"It isn't the colts. It's Cheyenne, Bill. What do you know about him?"

"Humph!" He was silent for a few moments, sorting out his ideas that he might give them expression with as few words as possible. Then, "Seen him work. Seen him fight—that time we run them Apaches down into the Sierra Madre. Seen him drink in Tombstone. He suits me."

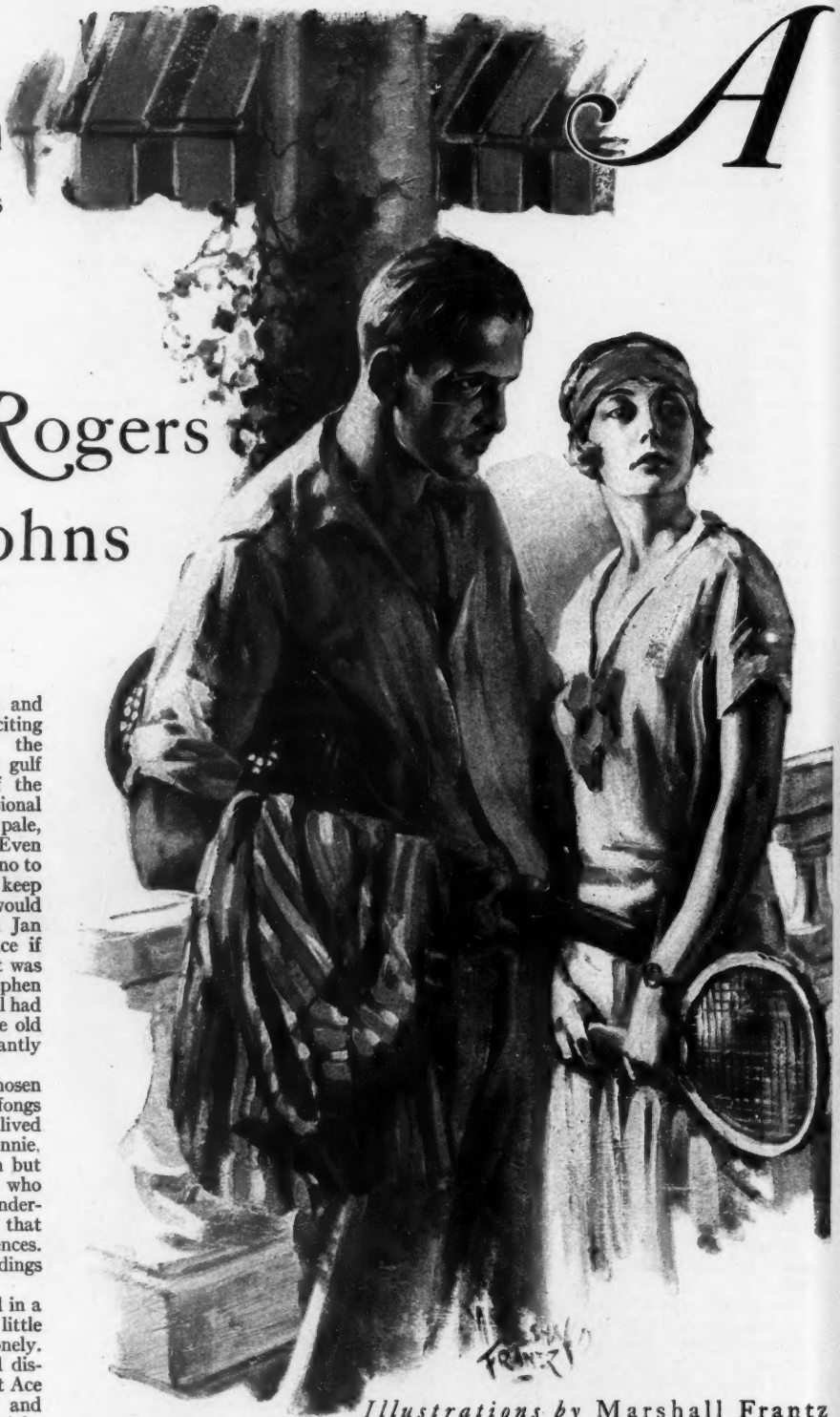
He closed his lips like a miser drawing his purse-strings, reluctant to spend more; but after a (*Continued on page 131*)

A Novel of a Girl who Defied the Conventions

A

By

Adela Rogers St. Johns



Illustrations by Marshall Frantz

The Story So Far:

THE marriage of Jan Ashe and Ace Wilfong made exciting newspaper reading for the people of San Francisco, for the gulf that lay between a daughter of the aristocratic Ashes and a professional gambler, a man outside the social pale, seemed to them insurmountable. Even Stephen Ashe, who had never said no to his daughter before, had tried to keep her from this step that he felt would mean unhappiness for her. And Jan had finally agreed to give up Ace if Stephen would give up drink, that was ruining him. This challenge Stephen had accepted, but his weakened will had succumbed again and again to the old desire, and in the end he had reluctantly consented to the marriage.

In the old house that Jan had chosen for their home the young Wilfongs were very happy. Stephen Ashe lived with them, and Ace's sister Gwennie, whose friendship Jan tried to win but failed. And it was Gwennie who brought about the final misunderstanding between Jan and Ace that was to have such fatal consequences. But there were other misunderstandings first.

For one thing, Ace was involved in a gambling war which left him little time for Jan—and Jan was lonely.

For another, Stephen Ashe had disappeared and Jan had learned that Ace knew of her father's intention and had not told her. And last, Dwight Sutro, an old friend of Jan's and a man of her own class, returned from abroad and continued the pursuit of her which he had begun in the days before she had loved Ace.

Ace was jealous and his jealousy was subtly fed by Gwennie, who had grown to hate Jan, until that night when it suddenly flamed to madness at the sight of the white orchids that came to Jan from someone besides himself. White orchids were Ace's special flowers for his wife and he was filled with rage at Jan for having sold that love secret. For, of course, he thought that they came from Dwight. He did not know that Jan could not imagine who had sent them, and was never to guess that Gwennie had done it. He rushed from the house—and Gwennie smiled.

THE gambling war was over. It had ended as it was bound to end, with Ace Wilfong victorious. That very thing which wise men knew would happen had come to pass, endangering the lives and purses and morals of citizens far beyond the mere dizzy hazard of gambling, which was all Ace Wilfong allowed. For with Ace's well-run and orderly gambling halls no longer operating in their usual omnipotent fashion, every tin-horn and crook and cheap gangster in San Francisco had opened a gambling joint of some kind.

Naturally, they were crooked. Naturally, men who have been cheated will retaliate in any way they can. Also, since the bankroll, though small, was not protected by any gentleman with

Free Soul



¶ *"When you're in fit company to speak to your mother," said Mrs. Sutro, "I'll be glad to see you, Dwight."*

a green eye-shade and a shotgun on his knees, the stick-up gangs preyed upon them, and it was often gang eat gang to a bloody and desperate finish, in which innocent bystanders were quite as apt to be the victims as anybody else.

The battle between Red Sullivan's crowd and Tut Inman and his gang from newspaper alley finally brought about a settlement, and the removal of Lieutenant Nelson to command an outlying district where he could do as little harm as possible in the future.

Red was running a small place for Ace opposite one of the big newspapers, merely shielding his two tables in the kitchen wing of a popular hash house. Here one night came Tut Inman, looking, so he said, for Ace Wilfong and spitting his usual vituperation and hate upon Ace's name. And Tut and his two cohorts stuck up Red's game and took his small bank-roll, vanishing into the night with many insults.

Red, who was a San Francisco Irishman of the maddest variety, was crazy with rage, and his lust for revenge he took to Bill Wilfong, well knowing that Ace would order him to keep quiet and forget about it. Bill decided that this would be an excellent time to unite with Red in giving Tut a lesson and making of Tut an example for the rest of these fresh eggs.

Red got a couple of girls, who easily separated Tut and the other boys who had pulled the job from their usual gang in the alleys. Then Red and Jock McMonagle and Bill Wilfong took them out to a dark and deserted meadow near the old Tanforan racetrack, where they beat them up in no mean fashion and left them penniless, blindfolded and stark naked.

The next night Tut Inman located the exclusive poker game which Ace was running in a certain select apartment-house for a few congenial and consequential gentlemen desiring high play. Standing in the doorway at the head of the stairs, Tut opened fire on Ace without warning. But Ace Wilfong's body was quicker than Tut Inman's gun. He dived under the boy's outstretched arm, slid halfway down-stairs on his stomach, and turning in the narrow space like a panther, shot upward, catching Tut exactly where he had planned to catch him, in the fleshy part of his gun arm.

The important thing was that he spoiled Tut's wild and accidental but nevertheless hair-raising aim, which was at that moment in the very face of a rich and influential old gentleman whose fondness for a quiet but reasonably stiff game of stud-poker was part of San Francisco's history.

His rage and stupefaction at Tut's abrupt entry and careless gun-play were equaled only by his gratitude to Ace Wilfong, and he himself escorted Tut Inman to the police station, where he publicly entered a complaint against him for assault with a deadly weapon with intent to commit murder, and declared loudly that nothing but Ace Wilfong's coolness and courage had saved his life. He also said, in no subdued tone, that things had come to a pretty pass when the police couldn't protect the lives of important citizens from attacks of that kind, and a gentleman's game from such unwarranted intrusions.

That proved the climax. The powers that be deported Lieutenant Nelson and sent for Ace Wilfong, and the ancient and peaceful *status quo* was restored.

So it would seem that Ace Wilfong should have rejoiced as he sat once more in his office on the top floor of that big

office-building and heard without the hum of voices and the click of chips.

But he was not rejoicing.

His old friend Scotty, scarred and grizzled by his years as a police reporter, coming up to congratulate him, found him very grave, preoccupied, thoughtful as he walked about the big room, his black eyes very watchful of what went on but his thoughts very far away.

Now Scotty had not come that night merely to congratulate Ace Wilfong upon his victory. Scotty had many underground lines and they had of late brought him messages that he liked very little. There was no man he admired more than Ace Wilfong, and he could remember Jan Ashe when she was a little thing whose feet would not touch the floor as she sat in the court-room beside her father

He had come tonight to look upon Ace Wilfong's face and see if he could read anything there. And he could read nothing. But it came to him with a pang that the boy was gone from Ace's face. There had been, only the last time he saw him, still something of the wild. shy, reckless boy about him, the boy adventuring upon life. Now that was gone. There was about him instead an air of being poised, of waiting, of watching.

"Things have come out all right for you, Ace," said Scotty as they stood over a crap table.

The king of the gamblers looked at him, and there was just the smallest suggestion of a twinkle in his eye. "Yes. That is going to be tough on some reporters. They will have to get to work now and find some real happenings. instead of just sitting down every morning and making up little pieces of fiction about me."

They laughed together and Ace moved on, standing behind a man at the stud table who was having an amazing run of luck. He seemed almost pleased with the man's luck. Just when Scotty had decided that Ace did not want to talk with him except in that crowded, noisy, hectically gay room, except beneath the glaring lights, the tall figure turned and led the way to the little office. He poured a drink for Scotty, but he shook his head when Scotty endeavored to include him in his own hospitality.

While Scotty drank, the telephone bell broke shrilly upon them.

Ace answered it absently. But the sound of the voice at the other end of the wire inflamed him with eagerness. "Mac!" he cried. "Mac!"

"Yeh," said the voice. "I'm down to the Ferry Building. But I ain't had no luck."

"You didn't find even a trace, Mac?"

"Nope. I combed Honolulu and I been up and down the coast of China like a terrier hunting rats, but I can't find him. This is an awful big world, Ace, and you know Steve. If he had made up his mind to disappear, the son-of-a-gun would disappear right. Anyway, he's got me licked."

"Not yet," said Ace. "Come on up, Mac. You might start for Mexico tomorrow. I had a tip that might mean something."

"How's Jan?" said Mac.

"She's—fine," said Ace Wilfong, "but—we must find him if we can. It was a mistake to let him go. I feel responsible."

"Don't you start feeling responsible for Steve Ashe," said the voice. "God give him twice the brains he give the rest of us. He'd ought to be able to look after himself. I'll be up."

As the receiver clicked into place, Ace Wilfong looked at Scotty and shook his head. Scotty had never seen him show disappointment before.

"We have been looking for Steve Ashe," he said. "His going away was a mistake. My wife would rather have him here no matter—she would rather have him *here*. I thought Mac might find him, but he has not."

"There are a lot of ports of missing men," said Scotty. "Where has Mac been?"

"Honolulu—Steve was there once, years ago."

"No," said Scotty, "Honolulu is in San Francisco's front yard. A thousand people would spot him there."

"And China."

"Yes—and Australia and South America and Mexico."

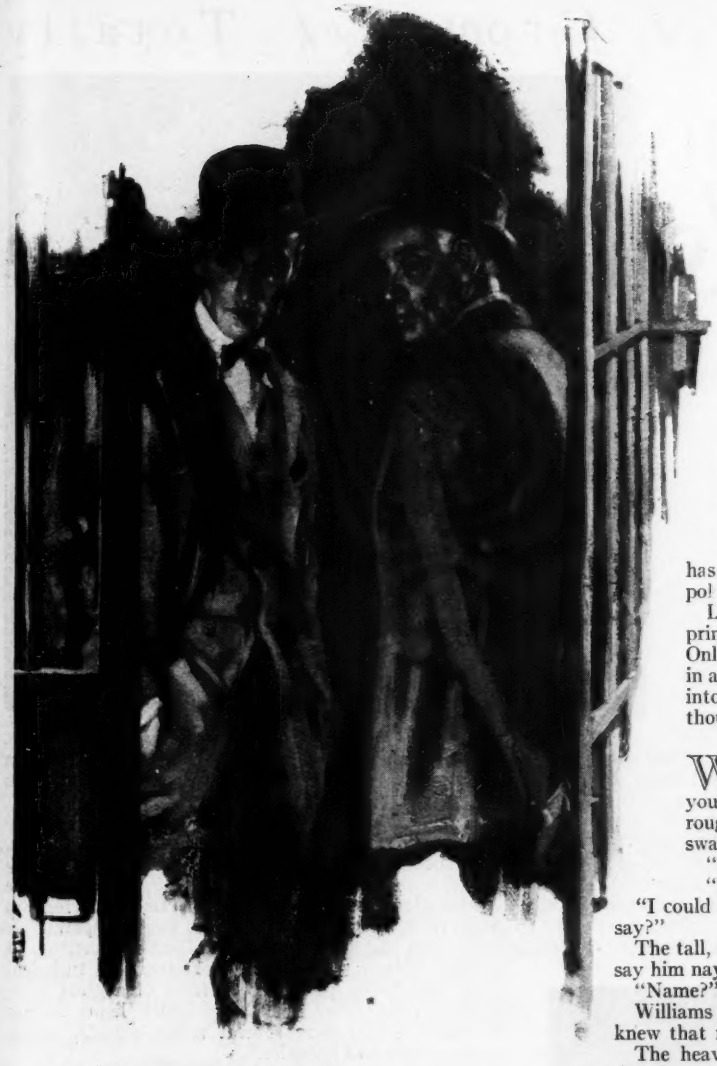
"I send him money. But the bank will not tell you for any reason."

"What bank?"

Ace named it.



They could whisper without being overheard, and that was all the privacy Jan and Ace might have—perhaps forever.



Scotty looked very thoughtful. "I might," he said—"don't count on it—it's a long chance—but I know some fellows in that bank pretty well. There might be a leak."

"I would be pretty much in your debt, Scotty," said Ace Wilfong.

"Don't count on it," said Scotty.

He accepted another drink.

At last, very casually, so casually that Scotty sensed instantly some grave importance to the thing, Ace said, "You know a right smart lot of people in this neck of the woods at that, Scotty."

"U-mm."

"I don't expect there are many people around here that you don't know their records and their character backwards. I have been to that morgue you have got down to your paper, with all them little cards and the numbers on to tell you what day and year you should look for, to locate stories from some man's past. But I don't suppose you have much use for them. You have a morgue in your own head."

"Rotten company if I have."

"Still, sometime it might give information to a friend."

"Yes—to a friend."

"If you turned over them little card indexes in your mind, do you suppose you'd find one on a fellow named Dwight Sutro?"

Nothing in Scotty's brusk, husky voice gave the faintest hint of the turmoil of amazement and apprehension that name on the gambler's clean, hard mouth had produced in him.

"I have known Dwight a long time," he said.

"Is he a *man*, Scotty?"

It seemed to Scotty that the air grew chill about him. Little waves ran before his eyes along the varnish of the flat-topped desk. The gentle voice of that question. The measured drawl. They pressed the truth from him against his will.

"I would not call him a man, Ace," he said. "It is a long time since I have heard a man say a good word for Dwight Sutro."

"How is Marguerite, Scotty?"

The gentle, sweet voice had, then, left that region of danger. The chill fled back, and Scotty looked into warm black eyes. Ace Wilfong never forgot to ask about Marguerite. When Marguerite graduated from high school, Ace Wilfong had sent her the biggest basket of flowers that any girl got.

"She's fine," said Scotty gruffly. Always afraid of betraying what a sentimental old fool he was when anybody spoke of Marguerite.

"Would you let Marguerite *marry*—a man like Dwight Sutro?" said Ace suddenly.

Scotty's oath tore through the air like a torpedo. Other oaths piled on top of it. Deep-mouthed, sincere, stupendous oaths.

"I don't reckon you'd even trust him in a poker game," said Ace Wilfong pleasantly. The code of indifference proper to such surroundings must be maintained. "Poker," said the king of the gamblers in that same gentle voice, "is a funny game. It shows a man up so plain. Cards don't hardly count in poker. It is a man's character, his brain, what he has got inside him that plays poker. I'd like to play poker with Dwight Sutro some time."

Looking up, Scotty caught the one dark pulse of primitive savagery that shot across the gambler's face. Only an instant it broke through like a flash of lightning in a dark sky. Then it was gone, and the mask fell again into place. Scotty could neither read nor guess the thoughts behind it.

WILLIAMS, opening the door of the little house on Buchanan Street, saw standing there a tall, dark young man in a gray hat worn a little on one side and a rough, dark overcoat belted tightly, with a bit of a swagger, about his slim waist.

"Yes, sir?" said Williams.

"Is Mr. Sutro at home?" said the tall, dark young man.

"I could see, sir," suggested Williams. "What name would I say?"

The tall, dark young man came into the hall, nor did Williams say him nay.

"Name?" he repeated. "My name is Wilfong."

Williams permitted his eyes to blink rapidly several times. He knew that name well enough.

The heavy, wine-red curtains dropped behind him. In the drawing-room, where firelight and candle-light made a soft glow, he did not wait, as was his custom, for Mr. Sutro to raise his head from the book he was reading.

"Mr. Wilfong to see you, sir," he said. The slightest emphasis on the "Mr."— and yet was there?

One quick movement, shoving away the decanter of brandy, the half-emptied glass. The smile froze in Dwight Sutro's blue eyes, froze to a sneer.

"I shall be very glad to see Mr. Wilfong," he said, and if Williams had laid stress upon the title, Dwight Sutro flung it back to him as a veritable mockery.

Williams held open the rich, heavy curtains. The tall, dark young man passed inside. It struck Williams that he moved like a panther. Williams dropped the curtains and left the two men alone together.

"Hello, Wilfong," said Dwight Sutro. Amazing how he managed to make those two words a taunt. Nor did he get up. His blue eyes never lost that smile, and in his dinner clothes he looked more than ever the aristocrat.

But if Ace Wilfong heard that taunt, he chose to ignore it. Not the slightest ripple touched his face. And if the other man had thought to gain advantage by keeping his seat, he was disappointed. Ace Wilfong towered over him, easy, cool, unruffled.

"We won't waste any time," he said, in that gentlest voice of his that was almost like a caress. "You know why I have come. I expect you are surprised that I did not come before. I have had some such surprise myself. But I have had reasons. Now I have come."

"So I see," said Dwight Sutro, with an exaggerated politeness, an insufferable politeness. "But why you have come still remains a mystery. We have little in common, you and I. Of course I will listen to anything you have to say."

"I thought you would." The gambler kept that cold, even tone, that gentle tone. "I will make it (*Continued on page 118*)

The First *of a* Group *of* Totally

3 *Birds* with 1 *Stone*



IMPATIENT of the numerous checks which had held up his car all the way from Croydon, Gerald Jennerton let down the window and looked out. London, he realized at once, was swallowing him up. Not the London upon which he had gazed half an hour ago from his earthward-gliding airplane—a huge, tumbled chaos of obscurity, with its far-spreading myriads of lights—but an engulfing wilderness of endless streets, through which cars from every direction seemed to be racing to some magnetic center.

The pavements were thronged with crowds of human beings, multitudinous, innumerable, like drab ants passing before the brilliantly lighted shop-windows. Farther northward a deeper red glowed in the misty sky—the reflection of the burning heart of the city. The young man glanced at his watch. After the smooth flying through windless skies, this labored progress tugged at his nerves. All the time, too, there was that mysterious telegram in his pocket.

Presently, although the crowds grew even denser and the tramway lines more complicated, the thoroughfares became wider, and progress speedier. They passed one of the great railway termini, joined in the slowly moving stream of traffic across the bridge, crawled along the Strand where the December fog was now an actual thing, turned at last into that long, comparatively silent street, which had always seemed to Gerald Jennerton, on his rare visits to it, like the backwater of a turbulent river, and finally pulled up in front of a great stone building from every window of which lights seemed to flash. There were several taxies outside, half a dozen cars parked opposite.



Gerald, descending and entering hastily, passed through a motley little crowd in the corridor on his way to the elevator and mounted to the third floor. He knocked at the door of one of the rooms and was promptly admitted. A large man, of pompous appearance, with gray hair inclined to curliness, and a *pince-nez* balanced on the end of his long nose, greeted him with apparent satisfaction.

"Ah, Mr. Gerald! Excellent! You can go, Miss Smithson," he continued, dismissing the secretary to whom he had been dictating some letters. "I will ring for you when I am disengaged."

The young woman disappeared and Gerald took her place.

"You are here sooner than I had thought possible," Mr. Brigstock remarked. "Which of my wires found you?"

"I was at San Remo. I caught the first train to Nice, flew to Paris yesterday and here this afternoon. What's wrong?"

Mr. Brigstock coughed portentously and removed his *pince-nez*, disclosing red-rimmed eyes of unexpected weakness.

"Something ridiculous," he confided, "yet something in a way alarming. Your father has disappeared."

"My father has what?"

"Disappeared—walked out on us—left the place last Tuesday night without a word or a message to anyone, and hasn't been heard of since."

"Good Lord!" the young man exclaimed. "What have you done about it? Have you let the police know?"

Mr. Brigstock frowned heavily. He leaned back in his chair and toyed negligently with the cord of his glasses.

Different Detective Stories



By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Illustrations by
Dalton Stevens

"What was the report from the club?" Gerald asked his companion.

"We have made the most searching inquiries there, as a matter of course. Your father arrived at his usual time, played several rubbers of bridge, dined; but instead of joining his friends in the card-room afterwards put on his hat and overcoat and left the club. The *commissionnaire* fancies that he saw him enter a taxi, but he was too far off to hear him give any address."

"Had my father any important cases which he was looking after himself?" Gerald inquired.

Mr. Brigstock produced a small note-book from his pocket, divided his coat tails carefully and sat down.

"Your question is a very natural and apposite one," he remarked approvingly. "There are two affairs to which your father was giving his personal attention. The first one concerns the disappearance of a young lady—Miss Clarice Laurieson, by name—photograph herewith, from one of the most exclusive boarding-schools on the south coast. We received, some ten days ago, a most agitated visit from Miss Townley, the principal of the establishment, who pointed out that to appeal to the press or to the police would mean ruin for her, and your father promised to interest himself in every possible way in discovering the young lady's whereabouts. So far as I know he has not met with

"My dear Mr. Gerald!" he remonstrated. "Think for a moment. We are Jennerton's Limited; we are the greatest firm of private detectives the world has ever known—a more important corporation now than even our American rivals. Who are we to go to the police? If we publish what has happened, we shall be the laughing-stock of the world. The head of the firm of Jennerton's tricked and abducted, or a voluntary exile, and his firm unable to discover his whereabouts! Consider the position, I beg of you. We have to be very careful how we move."

There was a brief silence. A puzzled expression crept into Gerald Jennerton's handsome, sunburned face. He was young, apparently of about twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. His bearing, voice, everything about him, denoted a secure and gentle position in life.

"Have you moved at all in the matter?" he inquired.

"Our disappearance section has made a few cautious inquiries," Mr. Brigstock replied, "but we are very anxious indeed to keep the matter out of the papers. There is scarcely a soul in this building who knows what has happened."

"Who saw him last?"

"Harmon, his servant. Your father, as you know, was a man of extraordinarily regular habits. At five o'clock on Tuesday he left his office, went up-stairs to his apartment, read the newspapers, had a bath, changed his clothes, and punctually at seven o'clock left here and went round to his club, where he usually dined. He has not returned since, although there are several matters of importance here, awaiting his decision. I suggest now that we go up to the apartment and that you see Harmon."

The young man, still a little dazed, rose to his feet, and accompanied by his father's partner, mounted to the top floor of the building where the missing Mr. Jennerton had an apartment. A middle-aged man servant of somber appearance ushered them into the living-room.

"Queer business this, Harmon," Gerald remarked, as soon as the door was closed.

"A very strange business indeed, sir," the man said.

"Was the Governor in good health?"

"I have never known him better, sir."

"And spirits?"

"Excellent. It was a foggy night on Tuesday, and his last words as he left here were, 'I'm not sure Mr. Gerald hasn't got the better of us out in Florence.' "

"So far as you know his plans were to spend the evening in the usual way?"

"Absolutely, sir."



any success, but he was without a doubt working on the case."

"And the other affair?"

"A very bad blackmailing case, put into our hands, I am sorry to say, after the—er—victim, Lord Porleston, had already parted with a considerable amount of money. It seems that his lordship was induced by someone or other to go to a private establishment to take dancing lessons. The full details are in your father's possession, but one gathers—er—that his lordship was discovered by the blackmailer, connected no doubt with the establishment, in a compromising situation with one of the young ladies. The seriousness of the affair lies principally in the high social and philanthropic position occupied by his lordship."

"Were these the only two cases on his private book?"

"The only two recent ones, but, as I dare say you know, it has been one of the ambitions of your father's life to bring about the arrest of Edgar Morris—the Bristol forger and murderer. The police of New York and London have searched Europe for him vainly for three years, and as a firm we were connected with the matter of his last exploit. He has remained undetected so long, however, that until last week interest in the case—'Murdering Morris' he was called, by the by—had faded somewhat into the background."

"And last week?"

"Your father had a communication," Mr. Brigstock announced, "the nature of which he apparently did not divulge to any member of the firm—certainly not to me. He sent for all Morris's records, however, his photographs and the photographs of his finger-prints. He went over to Scotland Yard to see if they had any later information, and for several days he had one of our best men making inquiries in the southwest of London."

"Where is that man?" Gerald asked quickly.

"Unfortunately, on his way to the States. Your father sent him over to see the Commissioner at New York."

The house telephone, which connected Mr. Jennerton's apartment with the offices, rang, and Mr. Brigstock hurried away to keep an appointment. Gerald remained upon the hearth-rug, looking around the comfortably furnished library. Mr. Jennerton, senior, had been a self-made man, but he was a man of taste. The curtains and hangings were harmonious, the few bronzes were excellent, the sporting prints authentic and the furniture Georgian of the best period—a thoroughly comfortable man's room.

"You have the keys of my father's drawers, I suppose?" Gerald asked the servant.

"I don't think there's a single thing locked, sir," Harmon replied. "Any valuables or anything to do with the business the master kept in his section of the safe down-stairs."

The young man pulled open the drawers and examined the contents. At the third one he paused.

"So far as I remember, Harmon," he said, "my father always used to keep a revolver in here."

"He did, sir. I noticed it last week."

Gerald searched once more.

"Well, it's gone," he announced finally, "and there's a broken box with six missing cartridges."

HARMON was puzzled. "I never knew the master to load his revolver in his life, sir," he confided. "He always used to say that the days had gone by for that sort of thing."

Gerald nodded. "Old-fashioned stunt he used to call it, I remember, carrying firearms. Did you go through the pockets of the clothes he took off on Tuesday afternoon?"

"You will find everything that was there on the corner of the mantelpiece, sir."

Gerald glanced over them—a very harmless collection of oddments. There was a torn fragment of thin pasteboard, however, in the cigaret case, which appeared to be the only object of interest. It was a highly glazed portion of what might have been a plain visiting-card, and upon it, in characters so faint that he had to take it to the clearer light to trace them, were written the figures 7107 Chelsea.

"Have you ever heard my father ring up that number, Harmon?"

"Never, sir," the man replied. "As a matter of fact, the master never rang up a number himself. He hated the telephone."

Gerald placed the torn piece of pasteboard carefully in his pocket. "I can stay here, I suppose, Harmon?"

"Your room is always ready, sir."

There was a knock at the door, and Mr. Brigstock made his reappearance.

"Know anything about this telephone number?" Gerald inquired, producing the card.

Mr. Brigstock studied it through his *pince-nez*. "Never heard of it," he announced.

"Could you find out who owns the number?"

"We have a special department for dealing with that sort of thing—a matter of five minutes at the most." He spoke through the house telephone, and gave a brief order. "No other discovery, I suppose, Mr. Gerald?"

"Only one thing, and that I don't quite like the look of," Gerald confided gravely. "My father appears to have taken his loaded revolver with him on Tuesday."

Mr. Brigstock was seriously concerned. "That," he observed, "seems to carry out the idea that your father had got on the track of 'Murdering Morris,' though why he should have kept it to himself I can't imagine. I have been with the firm, as I dare say you know, for nineteen years, and there's never been a time yet when he hasn't told me if there was anything serious looming. I don't understand it—I don't understand it at all."

"Neither do I," Gerald agreed gloomily.

"Your father and I are past the age for deeds of violence," his partner continued, pulling down his waistcoat a little over what was an undoubted protuberance. "There are members of our staff who are trained in the use of firearms, ju-jutsu, and all means of self-defense, but we ourselves have for years been concerned only with the civil side of the business. Our personalities, too," Mr. Brigstock concluded, "after all these years, are too well-known for us to engage with any likelihood of success in what I might—er—call the rough stuff. Your father's action, therefore, becomes the more—er—unaccountable."

There was a knock at the door, and a clerk entered bearing a typewritten slip of paper. Mr. Brigstock, after a glance at it, passed it over to Gerald:

> Number 7107 Chelsea is the telephone address of Miss Vera Cassan, Number 19A, Walmer Street, Chelsea.

MR. HENRY WENDERBY, on that same evening, holding an umbrella over his head and, with due regard to his dancing shoes, avoiding the puddles en route, crossed the street and rang the bell of Number 19A, Walmer Street, Chelsea. A trim-looking maid servant promptly answered his summons and ushered him into a comfortable little sitting-room on the ground floor.

"Mr. Wenderby," she announced.

The girl upon the sofa raised herself and nodded. She was very young and attractive in a queer sort of way—pale, with rather square features, and large, wonderfully colored eyes of a changing shade of hazel. Her delicately marked eyebrows, light brown hair shingled in the latest mode and the entire absence of cosmetics of any sort gave her an air of peculiar distinction. She welcomed her visitor with a lazy smile.

"Sit down for a moment, Mr. Wenderby," she invited him. "Help yourself to some coffee and bring your chair up here."

Mr. Wenderby obeyed without hesitation. He was a man apparently of a little past middle age, stout but with a well-knit figure, a healthy complexion, a humorous mouth and keen gray eyes. His hostess watched him thoughtfully as he poured out the coffee.

"For an Australian, Mr. Wenderby," she remarked, "you have very nice hands."

"It's because of my slack days in London," he confessed. "Somehow or other I don't know how to pass the time, so I just drop in and have a manicure."

"Always at the same place?"

Mr. Wenderby coughed and seemed for a moment embarrassed.

"No fool like an old fool, you know," he observed good-humoredly. "I don't know many folks in London, and I must say I like sitting down and talking to a pleasant-looking young woman sometimes."

She indulged in a little grimace. "You don't pay much attention to me," she remarked.

"You're a bit above my mark, ma'am," Mr. Wenderby declared bluntly. "You've too many swell friends around for a plain fellow like me. Look at you, all togged out tonight," he went on admiringly. "I bet you're off somewhere later on."

She laughed softly. "You're overmodest, Mr. Wenderby," she said. "You are not old, and you are rich, and there are too many girls in the world. You might choose whomever you wished. The truth is I do not believe that I am your style."

Mr. Wenderby appeared a little uneasy. "I'm half colonial and half British," he admitted, "and I was never much of a one for the foreign ladies—beautiful and delicate-looking though they are."

"You ought not to think me foreign," she said reprovingly. "I was at school in England. I have lived here all my life.

How easy it is to serve the finest tomato soup!

IT IS A well-known fact that the blending of tomato soup to suit exactly the tastes of many different people is a task that challenges the highest skill of the soup chef.

Haven't you had this experience at some time or other? A plate of tomato soup has been set before you. You looked forward to real enjoyment of its refreshing flavor. You took the first spoonful and it tasted somewhat "flat". Something was missing.

Why? Where did your sense of taste get its "education" in tomato soup? The tomato soup you serve regularly at home, the tomato soup which is most likely to be served to you when you are entertained—that has taught your appetite the true blend. Anything less is bound to be a disappointment.

And this blend is a condensed tomato soup—Campbell's. By blending it from an exclusive recipe that produces always the same uniform richness of flavor, and by condensing it so that it is available everywhere to the public in such convenient form, Campbell's lessen the housewife's work in the kitchen and offer even to the humblest table in the land, tomato soup as fine as it can be made.

So people everywhere have learned the important lesson of Soup. The sheer enjoyment of its delicious flavor. The healthfulness and invigoration which are derived from it. Its tonic and stimulating effect upon the appetite. More and more people every day are realizing that this hot, liquid food called soup, encourages the flow of the digestive juices and increases the benefit from all the food we eat.

Tomato is an ideal soup—appropriate for formal occasions, a wonderful standby for the regular family menus, splendid for the children, and unfailing in its invitation to the appetite. And housewives use Campbell's Tomato Soup for a great variety of their dishes to give extra zest and flavor. Try it as a sauce for meats, fish, sausage and salads and for added tastiness in spaghetti, rice, eggs or vegetables. Delicious mixed with roast beef gravy. Of course, it makes the most tempting Cream of Tomato Soup!



12 cents a can

WITH THE MEAL OR AS A MEAL SOUP BELONGS IN THE DAILY DIET!

However, it does not matter. I have given you up. I see that I make no impression upon you. Tonight you shall have your lesson from my little protégée. She is sweet and English and just out of boarding-school. Only you must promise me if I leave you alone with her that you will behave yourself."

"I'll try," he agreed, setting down his cup. "I can't say more than that. It depends upon the young lady a bit, too, doesn't it?"

Miss Vera Cassan rose gracefully. "I will take you to the studio," she said. "Afterwards I must go out. Come, my friend."

Mr. Wenderby held open the door in approved fashion, followed his guide down the hall, out of a side entrance, along a tiled passage and up four steps into a large studio, the door of which she opened with a key she was carrying. There was a phonograph at the farther end of the room, and against it a girl was leaning. She looked at Mr. Wenderby with frightened eyes.

"This is Mr. Wenderby, Clarice," Miss Cassan announced. "You are going to give him a lesson this evening. He is getting on nicely, but he wants to learn the tango."

"I'll do my best," the girl said doubtfully. "But I am not good enough to give a lesson."

"You are very foolish to say that," her friend declared coldly. "You dance very nicely. Do not hurry, Mr. Wenderby. Try and get on with Clarice. She is a dear girl really, but shy. And mind, Mr. Wenderby," she added, turning away with a mocking little smile, "remember all I have told you."

"Vera——" the girl began hastily.

"You can come to my room and talk to me when I get home," the other interrupted. "Have a good lesson, Mr. Wenderby. I may be back before you leave."

She nodded her farewells and departed, closing the door behind her. Mr. Wenderby glanced at his companion with a little inward chuckle of satisfaction. He was comparing her with the photograph in his pocket.

"Well, you've got your work cut out, young lady," he said cheerfully, "if you're going to teach me the tango."

She affected to busy herself with one of the records. Then she leaned towards him.

"Please do this," she whispered. "Please go away. It is for your own sake."

He waited for a moment whilst she started the phonograph. "Hold on a bit till I tie my shoe-lace," he begged.

He pushed back the curtains which divided the dancing floor from the small anteroom, and put his foot upon an easy chair. The girl followed him.

"I can't explain," she went on eagerly, "but please go. There is still time. If you call out to Vera, she will come back."

Mr. Wenderby smiled at her, and it was a smile of soothing and infinite protection. His shoe-lace was tied now and he held out his arms, prepared for the dance.

"Don't you worry, little girl," he whispered. "Henry Wenderby wasn't born yesterday . . . Start with my right foot, do I? Here goes!"

It was about half an hour later when Gerald Jennerton, acting upon a somewhat hazy impulse, stepped out of a taxicab and rang the bell at Number 19A, Walmer Street. There was nothing in the least unusual, he realized at once, about the appearance of the place. It was a pretty green and white painted house with window-boxes of chrysanthemums and cheerful suggestions of warmth and light through the chinks of the curtains. The door was opened almost at once by a trim-looking parlor-maid. She glanced at Gerald with an air of pleasant inquiry, but as soon as she recognized him the smile left her face as though by magic.

"Don't come in here, Mr. Gerald," she begged. "I wouldn't."

He looked at her in astonishment. Then he recognized her—the late parlor-maid of some rather intimate friends of his.

"So it's you, is it, Susan?" he exclaimed. "Why can't I come in?"

She looked nervously over her shoulder. "I wouldn't," she insisted. "You don't want dancing lessons, and if you did you'd best not take them here."

There was the sound of the opening of a door up-stairs. The girl suddenly stiffened. Gerald pushed gently past her into the hall.

"Will you be so kind as to tell your mistress that a gentleman is here? No need to mention my name," he added, in a lower tone.

The girl made no further protest. She ushered him into the comfortable little sitting-room where a bright fire was burning in the grate. Anything less sinister in the way of a living-room could scarcely be imagined, yet Gerald from the moment of his entrance was conscious of a sense of unaccountable disturbance. The room was small, and there were no communicating doors with any other apartment, yet he had the feeling that he might at any time be called upon to face a crisis.

He was ashamed of the sudden quickening of his pulses as he heard light footsteps in the hall. Then the door opened and Miss Vera Cassan entered. She came slowly towards him, no smile upon her lips, only a slight expression of inquiry. Her walk was graceful, her attractiveness impressive. Gerald was inclined to believe in those first few minutes that she had been a professional dancer.

"You wish to see me?" she inquired. "My name is Vera Cassan."

"I suppose I ought first to apologize for coming," he said, feeling inwardly grateful for Susan's hint. "The fact is I saw you dancing somewhere the other night, and I heard that occasionally you gave lessons. I wondered whether you'd have me for a pupil."

She looked at him curiously. Gerald, fortunately for his success in this and various other episodes in life, was a very good-looking young man. His features were well-cut, his head well-shaped, and his frame the frame of an athlete. The girl looked him over, and it seemed obvious that she approved of him.

"Who told you that I gave lessons?" she asked.

"A man of the party I was with that night. I don't remember his name. I don't think I ever heard it. There were rather a lot of us."

"Are you such a bad dancer that you need lessons?"

"One is never good enough nowadays. Besides," he went on, with a faintly apologetic smile, "from the right person I thought that lessons might be rather agreeable. You see I have been out of England for some time—haven't found many of my friends yet."

She motioned him to a chair, pushed a box of cigarets towards him and helped herself. Then she sank back among the cushions of the divan and looked at him thoughtfully.

"You cannot have a lesson this evening, if that is what you were thinking about," she confided. "The studio is engaged."

"Bad luck!" he murmured.

"If you want to dance very much," she went on, "you can do so. Some friends with whom I was going out have disappointed me. You can take me to the Embassy if you like."

"It will give me great pleasure," he replied.

She rose lightly to her feet.

"What is your name?" she asked.

Gerald, who loved the truth for its own sake and speaking truth as a policy, abandoned it with regret.

"My name is Robinson," he confided—"Gerald Robinson. I live mostly in Florence."

"Mr. Gerald Robinson," she repeated, with a slight contraction of the eyebrows. "And all you know of me is that one of your acquaintances whose name you do not remember told you that I gave dancing lessons. I wonder who he was! There are not many people who know so much. We do not advertise. I give lessons only to people who are worth while."

"I shall think myself very favored," Gerald assured her.

"Wait," she enjoined. "I will get my cloak."

She left him alone again, more at his ease now, but disposed to speculate as to whether this expedition to the Embassy was wise. Without a doubt, though, he must pursue his acquaintance with this girl. 7107 Chelsea! What did his father know about the place? And the girl? She was no ordinary dancing-mistress.

So far as he could, he made a further examination of the little room. There were several newspapers and magazines lying about, printed in a language which he failed to recognize, half a dozen French novels, a copy of *L'Illustration*, and a few English newspapers. The atmosphere of the room, taken in conjunction with its mistress, notwithstanding its simplicity, was perplexing. He wandered restlessly about. Suddenly he received a shock.

By the side of an easy chair, half underneath it, in fact, was a man's hat. The longer Gerald stared at it, the more intense grew his sense of familiarity. Mr. Jennerton, senior, was on the whole an exceedingly well-dressed man. He possessed one eccentricity, with regard to head-gear—an inordinate affection for a broad-brimmed black felt Homburg rather like a Spanish sombrero. It was an unusual form of head covering, and practically unmistakable

Gerald crossed the room towards the door and listened. There was not a sound from the stairs. He turned the hat lightly over with his foot, caught an illuminating glance at the "J" monogrammed inside, and kicked it a little farther under the chair. When, a moment or two later, Vera Cassan came back wrapped in a sable coat, he was standing in much the same attitude as when she had left.

"I have telephoned for a taxicab," she announced. "It will be here directly."

"Could we have a look at your studio while we wait?" he suggested.

Again there was that slight contraction of the forehead, the gleam in her eyes, half of question, half of suspicion. Gerald's expression, fortunately for him, was an ingenuous one, and he survived the scrutiny.

"The studio is occupied for the evening," she told him coldly. "You can see it another day—if I decide to give you lessons."

"If you decide?" he repeated disconsolately. "I thought that was already a promise."

She was standing very close to him, and he realized once more her subtle attractiveness.

"I only give lessons," she confided, "to those people whom I like. I am not sure whether I shall like you. I think I may. You are nice to look at, but I prefer to know everything about people whom I receive here. I have a guardian, too, who is very particular. You must tell me more of yourself."

"We will exchange confidences," he proposed. "You are not English, are you?"

"I am thankful to say that I am not," she agreed. "I am a mixture of Polish, Russian, with perhaps a little German—my mother was half English—that is why I speak the language without difficulty."

The parlor-maid announced the arrival of the taxicab and followed them out, carrying her mistress's bag. As she stood away from the door for Gerald to enter, her lips moved; the faintest of whispers reached him—"Don't come back."

Mr. Jennerton, senior, who seemed by some miraculous means to have assumed the clothes and personality of Mr. Wenderby, went puffing and blowing round the studio to the strains of a jazz tune with a nimbleness and vigor which bespoke previous efforts in a similar direction. Once or twice he glanced curiously at his instructress—a very young girl with red-gold hair, slim, pale, with a curious look of disturbance in her eyes and expression. As they reached the far end of the room, she spoke for almost the first time.

"I should like to say something to you," she whispered.

Mr. Jennerton gave no signs of having heard, but he paused, mopped his forehead with a handkerchief and picked up some records.

"Let's sit down in the alcove here and look through these," he suggested, in a loud voice.

They passed behind the curtained space

Why thousands upon thousands come back to Fels-Naptha and come back to stay!

They have found—as you will too—that for real downright washing value, making it easier to get your clothes thoroughly and safely clean—*nothing can take the place of Fels-Naptha!*

Fels-Naptha gives you *extra* help because it gives you the cleansing value of unusually good soap and plenty of dirt-loosening naptha—two safe, thorough cleaners that work hand-in-hand and help each other.

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Prove this extra helpfulness of Fels-Naptha for yourself. Use it for washing clothes and general household cleaning. Buy it next time you are at the store.

Smell the naptha in Fels-Naptha!



Many women get the extra help of Fels-Naptha in their washing machines. They dissolve it in hot water, or chip it directly into the machine. They get more than soap suds. They get creamy suds, enriched with dirt-loosening naptha. Use water of any temperature with Fels-Naptha. Boil clothes with Fels-Naptha if you prefer. You are bound to get good results any way you use it. The real naptha in Fels-Naptha makes the dirt let go, no matter whether the water is cool, lukewarm or hot. We'll gladly send you a sample of Fels-Naptha, *FREE*.

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Extra help



and seated themselves upon a divan. The girl suddenly gripped his wrist.

"This is a horrible place," she confided. "I want you to go away, to leave me—you will be in trouble if you don't go away."

"And leave you here?"

"Take me with you if you will," she went on, her voice shaking with agitation. "I had no idea what it was going to be like when Vera—she was our dancing-mistress at school—sent for me and said what a wonderful time we would have. And, Mr. Wenderby, I want you to leave *at once*. If you don't there will be trouble. I didn't understand the first time when Lord Porleston was here. I know now. If you don't take me away, I shall get away as soon as I can."

Mr. Jennerton smiled. "My dear," he assured her, "you don't need to worry about me. I want to see this thing through. I'm here to find out what's wrong with the place."

Her face lightened. "You mean it?"

He nodded. "What's the program?" he inquired.

"In five or ten minutes," she whispered, "I bring you in here to rest, and then a horrible man who has a room here—he seems to be in hiding—creeps in and makes a disturbance. You are supposed to be frightened——"

"I understand," Mr. Jennerton interrupted. "We'll see whether we can't turn the tables for once and frighten him, eh? Come along."

They danced again; the girl this time almost joyously. With the terrified expression gone from her eyes, she was remarkably attractive-looking. Mr. Jennerton glanced at the clock. The hour had arrived.

"Would you like to rest?" the girl faltered.

He nodded. They made their way once more to the divan and sat down. Mr. Jennerton lighted a cigaret. Suddenly he leaned forward. His quick ear had caught the sound of stealthy footsteps coming across the room.

"Ought to give 'em a run for their money, put my arm round your waist or something," he whispered, smiling. "Let's have a look."

He tiptoed to the chink in the curtain. A man was crossing the room, dressed in dark clothes, a man with a long, worn face, hollow eyes and closely cropped black hair streaked with gray. He might very well have passed muster as a school-master, or a respectable pedagogin any walk of life. Mr. Jennerton, however, after his first glance of curiosity, suddenly stiffened through all his ample frame. His eyes flashed, his good-natured face was set in lines of steel. One hand slipped into his pocket; with the other he drew back the curtain.

"Put 'em up, Morris," he shouted—"put 'em up—quicker!"

For the first and last time during his career a master in his profession lost his nerve, and paid the penalty.

At the Embassy, which Vera Cassan entered with the air of an habituée, they found a corner table, and as it was barely half past ten, decided to sup a little later. Gerald ordered wine, and they danced. She nodded as they sat down.

"You will be worth giving lessons to," she admitted.

They drank a glass of wine. Neither the dancing nor the champagne brought any access of color into her cheeks, or any increased warmth into her tone, but somehow or other he was conscious of a change. Her fingers lingered upon his hand once. Her eyes called him a little closer to her.

"It is agreed," she whispered. "I shall give you those lessons."

They danced again and again, until presently some people came in whom she appeared to know—a big man who was treated everywhere with much respect, and two younger companions. They took a table at the farther end of the room, and Gerald's dancing partner showed signs of restlessness.

"There is someone with whom I must speak," she confided. "Will you wait for me?"

He stood up and moved the table to allow her to pass. After she had gone he sat, not watching her, but looking at the half-opened platinum and gold bag she had left behind. In one corner, just visible, were two long keys, fastened together with a small gold chain. He recalled Susan's murmured words on the pavement as she had dropped them in—"The keys of the side door and the studio, miss." The studio, occupied for the evening! By whom? For what purpose, if she were the dancing instructress? And why locked?

The sight of the keys fascinated him. More than once his hand stole out across the table-cloth. Then he was conscious that she was returning to him. He stood up again to let her pass to her seat, but she remained standing.

"Do you mind very much," she asked, "if I dance with one of those men? He is a Russian—one of my pupils—and——"

"Please do," Gerald begged. "I shall go and talk for a few minutes to a friend of mine. He has just asked me to have a drink in the bar."

She left him with a little nod. As soon as she had reached the other end of the room Gerald's fingers stole again across the table-cloth . . . In two minutes he was in a taxi-cab; in a quarter of an hour, outside the house in Chelsea. The lights were dimmed in the front now, but the moon had risen, and he was able to see what had escaped him before—a long side entrance, and at its farther end another building which had obviously been an artist's studio. He made his way cautiously towards it.

There were lights visible from behind the drawn curtains, and a phonograph was playing a fox-trot. A wave of doubt depressed him. That sense of the mysterious which had buoyed him up to action since the parlor-maid had whispered her warning, seemed suddenly to fade away. There was something banal and ordinary about the music of that fox-trot, something which dispelled at once all his vague suspicions. He was conscious of a most chilling conviction that he was making a fool of himself.

Then, as he lingered upon the step, one slight circumstance rekindled his flagging spirit of adventure—the fact that although the phonograph played smoothly on, there was no sound of shuffling footsteps or voices, and before him the door—an unusually solid one—stood fast closed. He took his courage into his hands, fitted one of the keys into the lock, and threw it open.

It was exactly at the same moment that Vera Cassan returned to her place, wondering a little at Gerald's prolonged absence, and pushing past the table, glanced towards her bag. The cold light of fear stole into her eyes. Her fingers crept into its furthest folds, and searched—in vain. She half rose to her feet, to find the big man with whom she had been talking standing in front of her. He leaned down.

"Where is that man?" he demanded.

"Gone," she answered. "And my keys—he or someone has taken them."

The man's face was black with anger "You fool!" he exclaimed. "Do you know who he was?"

"Only his name—Gerald Robinson."

He shivered with some sort of emotion, which might have been anger, or fear.

"Every man in this world," he pronounced, "who reaches the end before his proper time reaches it through a woman's folly. That was Gerald Jennerton, the son of Jennerton, the detective."

A brilliantly lighted but empty room, with rows of chairs around the walls—all empty—a phonograph playing apparently for ghosts—and a dead man stretched out upon the shining floor! Gerald looked about him in tragic bewilderment. The curtains at each end of the room were closely drawn; there was no sign or sound of human life. Then a great fear surged in upon him. Surely there was something familiar about the outline of the man who lay doubled up—a shapeless mass—only a few yards away.

Gerald took one faltering step forward, his eyes distended, an agony of apprehension creeping into his heart. One more step—he thrust out his hand—and then darkness!

Gerald, trying to stand upright, found his knees quivering, his heart pounding. Fear, for the first time in his life, had seized upon him. There was blackness, curiously complete. Every light had gone out. The high windows let in not a single gleam of the overhead moon. He could see nothing—not even the shape before him. Only through it all the phonograph played on. The strains of a popular melody rang out through the tragic atmosphere:

"If you knew Susie,
As I know Susie,
Oh, oh, oh, what a girl! . . ."

Gerald forgot everything else. An effort of movement seemed to relieve the paralysis of his nerves. He staggered towards the phonograph, threw himself upon it, felt feverishly around its mechanism, found what he sought, touched the switch—and then silence.

He stood there for a moment making an effort to recover himself. Sanity swept back in waves. He raised his voice.

"Is there anyone here?"

There was no reply. The place was obviously empty. He groped his way to the wall, felt along until he came to a switch, turned it without result. From somewhere or other the lights had been turned off. He felt in his pocket. There was a gold match-box attached to his chain. He drew it out and opened it. There was one match. Holding this in his fingers, he made his way slowly back to the middle of the room. His feet shuffling forward came into contact with something soft.

He sank on to his knees, and cautiously felt the body of the man, already a little stiff. For a moment his fingers trembled so that he feared to light the match. Then he drew it swiftly across the corrugated portion of his match-box. For a single moment the light flared out. He saw the face of the dead man, the eyes unclosed, the mouth twisted in agony—and the face was the face of a stranger . . .

With that insurgent wave of relief came a curious lessening of the nervous tension which had almost deprived him of his senses. He stood up and for the first time found his brain working naturally. Whoever had been in this place had left it and closed the door—had left the dead man here to tell his own story. He groped his way along the wall to the door, and shook it. He broke the blade of his penknife against the spring-lock from the outside of which by some evil chance he had omitted to remove the key, looked up at the windows ten feet above the floor, groped behind the curtains to find a sort of anteroom; but no windows, no sign of an exit.

He came out again, suddenly stopped and listened. There were steps approaching along the tiled way—light steps and heavier ones—two people. Vera Cassan, perhaps, and a man. He heard them hesitate outside, and then the sound of a key—his key—in the lock. He felt a rush of air. He was dimly conscious of two shadowy forms. The girl spoke.

"The lights have been turned off from the house," she said. "You will find a small switch on the left."

Then there was light—floods of it—and Gerald, disheveled, distraught, wild-eyed, as he felt himself and as indeed he was, faced the two newcomers, faced too the wicked-looking cylinder of an automatic which the big man had drawn like lightning from his pocket.

"Who's this?" he demanded.

The girl sprang forward with a little cry which was half a moan. She was directly in the line of fire. She turned to Gerald.

"Did you do this?"

He shook his head. Just at that moment the power of speech was denied him. The man who had lingered upon the threshold came slowly forward. He was a big, fleshy man, with pendulous cheeks and dark lines under his eyes, but the hand which still gripped the automatic was amazingly steady. Suddenly Gerald felt his voice strong within him.

"I know nothing about it," he said. "I

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166 *Women Guests*

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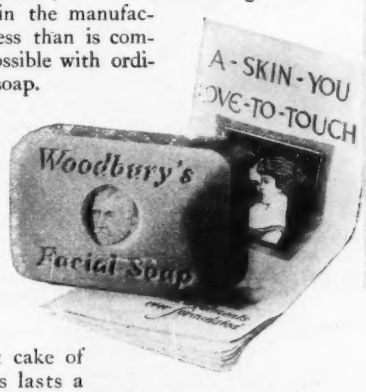
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came in search of my father. I found the place empty."

The girl laid her hand upon the barrel of the automatic. "At least," she scoffed, "you should be gambler enough to know the folly of forcing a losing game. Jennerton has been here. He has taken Clarice away."

"This is Jennerton's son," the man muttered. "I hate all detectives. I hate the breed."

The girl stood indifferently between them. "You'd better go," she advised Gerald.

He moved towards the door. The man was scowling, obviously undecided. An instinct of bravado seized Gerald, as he felt the cold draft of air and freedom.

"Those dancing lessons?" he asked.

She smiled at him. "Some day, perhaps."

Then a dash of falling rain and wind up the passage brought sanity.

Mr. Jennerton, senior, and a young lady were sharing a bottle of champagne and a plate of sandwiches when Gerald made a somewhat precipitate entrance into the flat.

"Dad!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

Mr. Jennerton held out his hand.

"My lad," he explained, "Miss Clarice Laurieson. Been looking for me, Gerald? Your friend Susan told me you were round that little shanty in Chelsea. Here, take a drink. You look as though you needed it."

Mr. Jennerton, senior, poured out a glass of champagne; Mr. Jennerton, junior, promptly swallowed it.

"Glad you turned up," the former continued amiably. "You can take Miss Clarice back to her boarding-school tomorrow. By the by, what made you leave Florence?"

"Brigstock wired me to come—told me when I arrived that you'd disappeared."

Mr. Jennerton sighed heavily. "I shouldn't call it a disappearance," he said. "I changed places with a Mr. Henry Wenderby, an Australian, for a few days. You see, there was this young lady practically held in bondage by an old schoolfellow—very bad lot, I'm afraid, that Miss Vera Cassan; there was poor old Lord Porleston being worried into his grave by a blackmailing hound; and 'Murdering Morris'—well, I admit 'Murdering Morris' was a surprise to me."

"The man you killed!" the girl gasped.

"My dear," Mr. Jennerton, senior, expostulated gently, "if I hadn't killed him he would have killed us. Every officer in the New York police force, and everyone trusted with a revolver from Scotland Yard has had orders to shoot him on sight for years. So don't you worry about that . . . How are pictures, Gerald?"

"I've finished with them," was the prompt reply. "I'm coming in with you, Dad. This is the life!"

Mr. Jennerton, senior, beamed. From his capacious pocket he drew out a morocco-bound note-book and handed it to his son.

"Oblige me," he said, "by beginning your duties at once. You will find the case of Lord Porleston there; place a red cross against it—blackmailer shot. There are three pages on 'Murdering Morris'—shot. There is the disappearance of Miss Clarice Laurieson—another red cross—returned to her school. It has been the unique experience of my life, Gerald, to finish off three little matters in one night . . . Have another sandwich."

Miss Clarice smiled across the table, and Gerald decided that she was the most beautiful young woman he had ever seen.

"I'm glad you're going to stay in England," she murmured.

Diplomacy Begins at Home *by Kathleen Norris* (*Continued from page 47*)

you everythin' in the house for tomorra', Ella?"

"Oh, sure, I'm burrid in food. The Knights sint me tin dollars wort' of flour an' sugar an' coffee an' dear knows what all, for Thanksgivin', an' Georgie Kane won three tur'rkeys in raffles, an' sint me a bir'rd—you seen it?—bigger than the baby himself—God bless him. If ye'd seen Tim's poor mother stuffin' it, you'd think it was bigger than she was!" Ella recounted animatedly.

They all laughed in exquisite sympathy and pleasure. Kate was still buttering, pouring, peeling, when Jim came home an hour later.

The old woman had slipped out to church, the baby was fussing and babbling happily to herself in her high chair. On the floor, with dishpan and clothes-pins, blocks, empty spools, starch boxes, small battered dolls and odds and ends of a hundred cheap toys, Agnes, Mary Marg'ret, Helen and Josie were harmoniously playing. Bernadette was expertly and self-righteously helping her mother.

It was not quite dark at four o'clock, but already there was a cold snowy gloom over the shabby world outside, except where an angry red sunset burned behind the straggling fences and the ugly factories.

"Where's Vic?" Jim presently demanded.

"He's over at Harry's."

"Way up there, huh?"

"It's only about ten blocks, Papa."

"Ten blocks across the tracks an' the highway," Jim grumbled. But Kate was relieved that he returned to his newspaper again.

Her eyes strayed to the clock, over and over. Four-twenty—twenty-five minutes of five—what on earth was keeping Victor?

The girls were always so good; Bernadette hadn't been whipped since actual babyhood. Mary Marg'ret and Agnes were already responsible persons, painfully, beamingly anxious to please. Even Helen and Josie obeyed like little soldiers.

But Victor, Kate's one boy, was absent-minded, indifferent; he had even been saucy, upon occasion. Such a darling, with his big freckles and his red hair, his awkwardness and his forgetfulness!—but he was already more of a care than the six girls put together.

Why *didn't* he come home? Every sound outside the door made Kate's heart spring up with sudden relief and hope. There he was!

No, it was the grocery boy with the sugar. A telegram came from Cousin Lizzie. Cousin Lizzie had just got Kate's Monday letter this day, and was sorry she couldn't have come down, and much love.

So that was all right. And the dried apple sauce was all right. Everything was all right, except the cruel little clock that was moving so fast, and the darkening evening outside, and no Victor. No Victor. No Victor.

Kate felt as if her heart were a flat-iron, dragging her down. The houses of the neighborhood, dim shapes now in snowy blue gloom, shut into themselves, drew shades. Five o'clock. Five-ten.

Ah, thank God, at last a step on the porch! Oh, let Jim scold all he would now, here was the child at last!

But no. It wasn't Victor. Kate swallowed with a dry throat.

It was Ella, beaming over the success of the cemetery ruse. She had rented the house, she stated triumphantly.

"I've on'y a minute itself, Katy, but sure I had to come in an' tell ye!" Ella said. "Whin I got home at three," she reported, "Tim's mother was frettin' to go to the cemetery. So I left the twins wit' the baby, an' took fourteen dollars in me hand, an' walked over to me brave feller as quiet as a lamb. 'There's one more question,' he says to me, afther we'd talked a bit, 'How manny children have ye?' he says. 'Well,' I says, 'I cud have the law on ye for that same question you'd be askin',' I says. 'I never says it'd make anny differ,' he says like a shot, an' he tur'rned the color of that lard. 'All I want is to know,' he says. 'Well,' I says, 'I has thim twins you seen, at home wit' the baby,' I says, 'an' two more, that's up in the graveyard wit' their poor father!' Wit' that he says I cud have the place, an' I paid me mont's rint, an' on Monda' we'll be in!"

Kate's anxious face lighted with pleasure at this satisfactory conclusion of a delicate matter.

"I'll keep a coupla thim here until Winsda' or Thur'rsda' " Kate offered. And then—she couldn't help it, even if it betrayed her devouring anxiety to Jim!—she had to add: "Vic's not over at your place, Ella?"

"He is not, thin!" answered Ella.

"He'd oughter be back from Harry's," Kate admitted miserably.

"Isn't he back from Harry's yet!" Ella exclaimed. "It's beginnin' to snow somethin' terrible," she added innocently. At the words Jim looked up, his jaw quite visibly tightened.

Ella had a visible second of surprise and puzzlement, then her eye met Kate's; nothing was said, their maternal glances simply rested together for a brief half-second. Immediately Ella's look explored the kitchen; the old woman was drowsy in her corner, the little girls and babies playing quietly. But no Victor was in sight.

"But sure it's hardly dark, yet," said Ella, with easy reassurance. "I wudden't wondher is he at my house, annyway," she added. "I come right from the new house here——"

Jim interrupted the explanatory phrases with a brief, mirthless laugh. "He was told to come in at four'r!" he said grimly.

"There wasn't no hour mentioned, Papa!" Kate corrected nervously.

"Dark. He's no fool," Jim persisted inflexibly. "He knows whin dark is."

"They get playin'," Ella offered placatingly.

"He won't do much playin' whin I'm done wit' him," Jim prophesied heavily.

"Time's nothin' to children," Kate said.

"You'd think," Ella said in an undertone, "you'd think Harry's mother wud start him home, come this time."

"She wor'rks in Woolwort's Saturda' afthernoons," Kate explained. "That's fast," she added in a whisper, glancing at the clock that was racing so mercilessly toward six.

"One minute slow," Jim amended, glancing at his big silver watch.

"Boys will be boys!" Kate said cheerfully and easily. But the words fell somewhat flat. Ella, unwilling to leave until Vic came in, nevertheless had no choice. There were five babies at her house, waiting for supper.

"He'll be in, as gay as a lark, wondherin' what you're all worried about!" she predicted, departing. But Jim did not smile.

"There's manny wud phone the police!" the old lady said, shrilly, from her corner.

"Why, Mother dear'r, this is nothin' for a big boy like him," Kate argued confidently. She kept the tail of her eye on Jim. Would he beat the child? Jim was a powerful man; hardly knew his own strength when he punished the children.

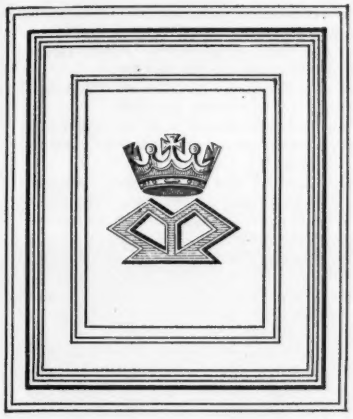
If he whipped poor little freckled, absent-minded Vic! Kate's heart stopped beating, and her throat thickened. There was a leather strap hanging by the sink; she wondered if she dared throw it somewhere—where it couldn't be found.

No use. Jim would just use his big belt, or his shoe, or a plank torn from a box.

"O God!" Kate prayed, already hearing the child's screams, already imagining the scene.

It was all wrong to have a big man beat a little boy, no matter what the little boy did. To grip him by main force, and hurt him until his pitiful little pride, his tearful, desperate little boy determination to be silent were crushed, until he was driven to scream for mercy, to writhe—no, it wasn't fair.

She saw herself sick and shaken and palpitating with resentment and horror, the younger children all weeping—— "O my God, that loved the children, don't leave his father touch him tonight!"



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[On your radio—tune in on WRVA, Richmond, Va —the Edgeworth Station. Wave length 256 meters.]

Ten minutes of six. And a black, snowy, muffled night. "If Jim don't kill him, I'll have him over me knee meself," Kate thought, in the gathering agony of her heart.

And with the first stir of indignation on her own part, she had her cue. Molding her fish-cakes for supper, she stood in splendid dignity at the kitchen table, and fired the opening shot of her campaign.

"There's on'y one thing worries me, Jim. The child's all right," said Kate, "an' he'll come streakin' in here as cheerful as if it was nine o'clock in the mornin'. But the way *you* punishes the children, sure, it makes small differ to thim that they'd not go straight off an' do the same thricks over again on me!"

Pathetically and mildly delivered, the effect of this speech was electrical upon Jim Oliver. His eyes glinted fire, and his big unshaven jaw tightened.

"It'll make a differ to this bould young lad of mine, befoore I'm done wit' him!" he assured her.

"I'm goin' to give his Christmas phonograph to Ella's Francis," Kate said. "An' his boots, that he thinks so much of, I'll sind over to Annie Curley," she added.

Jim's position—he was sitting in a menacing, waiting attitude on the edge of a chair, his eyes constantly and expectantly on the door through which his recalcitrant son was presently to approach—did not alter by the fraction of an inch. But there was a sort of disturbed surprise in his eye, and a subtle modulation in his voice when he finally spoke.

"Ed Moore give him thim boots—I don't know wud Ed get mad if he seen thim on one of the Curley kids."

Kate, briskly busy, vengeance burning in her fine eyes, was silent for a space.

"About the Christmas play," she began presently, as if she had not heard Jim at all, "I'll sind him round wit' a note to Father Mac. He'll not be in that, an' that'll mean that he isn't in the theeayter par'rty—it's on'y those that's in the play that goes to that. That'll learn him somethin'."

"I'd hate to get out wit' Ed Moore," Jim suggested, with a faint trace of uneasiness.

Kate paid no heed. "I wish you'd leave *me* lick him," she said, after a space.

"*I'll* lick him," Jim stated hastily.

"It's no good if you don't take the hide right off him, Jim. A big feller like him! Scarin' the wits out of the bot' of us——"

"Here's a funny thing!" Jim said, as if surprised at the discovery. "We'd think nothin' at all of it if this was summer. Manny's the night the whole throop of thim's runnin' the streets like the deer, while it's light!"

"Katy, alanna," pleaded the old woman, speaking for the first time in half an hour, "don't tur'rn against the yoong lad, dear'r. Sure, the bist of thim's not goin' to kape an eye on the clock, whin they'd be playin'. He's only a choild——"

"He's nine," Kate said sternly and inflexibly.

"He'll not be nine until Saint Joseph's Day, that's a good four mont's ahead," Jim corrected her promptly.

"His boots—his phonograph—an' I'll take his bicycle money, he's got all of eight or nine dollars saved up—I'll take that an' give it to the Mission," Kate mused, now lowering her floury cakes into a sizzling pan. "Lord knows I hate to do it," she went on, in an artful moment of softening, "I hate to think of the poor little feller cryin' his little hear'rt out—he'll sob in there for hours, for he prayed for his phonograph—he made a novena for it, the poor little shr'rimp!—an' the pride of him, whin the whole neighborhood streaks in here to hear Vic Oliver's phonograph wud make your hear'rt ache. But I'm goin' to learn him good while I'm about it—I'll shame him befoore the whole crowd of thim, for indeed I'll tell thim just why Francis O'Connor has got it—I'll do that! An' I'll let thim know you licked him, too!"

"Why, Katy, I never seen you so hot," the old woman commented anxiously. "It's on'y a choild's innocint thrick, dear'r—he manes no har'rm at all!"

Jim, troubled, affectionate, apprehensive, looked significantly at his mother.

"Kate has the divil's own timper, whin she'd be roused," he admitted, nodding.

"Well, God help us all, in all the mont's I'd be here, I never seen her loike this!" the old woman murmured, awestruck.

Kate slammed the oven door, rose red-cheeked and untamed to her feet. "You'll see a good deal, whin that omadhoon comes in!" she promised grimly.

There was a short silence. Then Jim said: "My father, God rest him, used to lick the hide off us, whiniver he'd come home tired from market, but all the good it done us was that we hated the old man!"

Kate was silent. The kitchen was filled with the savory fumes of dinner now; the bread pudding, glazed and brown and stuffed with fruit, was turned upside-down upon a plate.

"I was goin' to have my cousin Peter fix him a little tool-box for his Christmas," the mother presently recalled; "I'll tell him all about the hammers an' saws an' what-not it was goin' to have in it, an' that I cudden't think of goin' to all that trouble for a feller that wud give me this scare!"

"Well, God knows it's your own doin' if you're scared, Katy," her husband observed mildly. "Sure, I'm not fool enough to worry about a big husky kid, that he'd not be home by six o'clock—or a thrifle later. Manny's the night you'd sind him yoursilf to the store—later than this—here he is now!"

The door clicked. The truant, red-cheeked, snow-powdered, muddy of boots and panting, stood on the threshold. He looked anxiously at his father, but Jim's apprehensive gaze directed the child's own to Kate, and everybody remained motionless, watching her.

"I'm—I guess I'm kinder late, Pop," Vic faltered, in an awful silence. "I din know it was late—Harry din have any clock in his kitchen," he burst out bitterly, his lip outthrust, his face suddenly wrinkled with tears. "Mom—Mom——" he stammered, weeping, and holding out to Kate his little arms.

"Don't you come near me, you rennygade!" Kate said in a terrible voice.

Vic's horrified eyes sent a despairing and fleeting look along the circle of his sisters' appalled and watching faces; his grandmother, shriveled in her corner, offered no succor; his father's bewildered and infinitely troubled scrutiny was still upon the slim, flat-chested, red-headed and utterly unfamiliar figure of the Amazon at the kitchen table, in whom Victor was entirely unable to recognize his mother.

"Mom—Mom——" the little boy persisted, almost in a scream now. "Are you mad at me? Are you *mad* at me?"

"Katy," Jim pleaded, in an undertone, "whatever he's done, dear'ry—sure, boys is like that—he meant no har'rm—an' you're frightenin' the whole pack of thim——"

The hint of unexpected championship in his voice, the apologetic tone, destroyed the last remnants of Vic's control. The little boy's whole body shook with sudden, bitter sobbing.

Jim gave a madman's look about his usually happy home. His old mother was crouching in her rocker, praying; his little daughters were staring aghast upon the scene; his wife—good, gentle, serene Katy—was wild-eyed and furious and panting for cruel revenge, and his only son was heart-broken and in danger.

"Katy——" the man pleaded, indicating with a glance of compassion the bowed little crying figure. And then as Kate remained implacable and magnificent in wrath, he held out a hand. "Vicky," he muttered. "Son——"

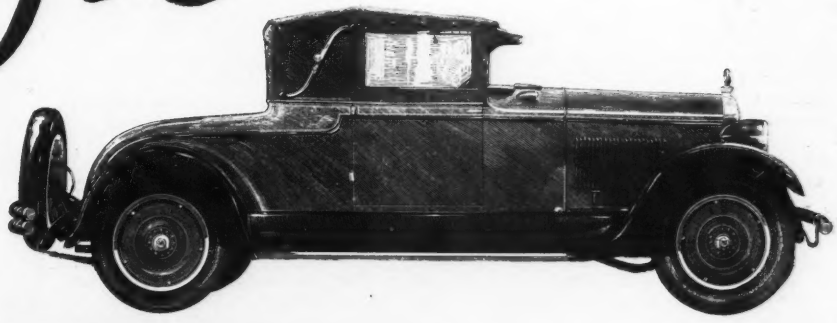
At the magic word that, so spoken, means only love and forgiveness, Victor wheeled blindly and, still sobbing, stumbled across the floor. He was in his father's arms, he felt them strong and safe about his littleness and badness, he felt the touch of his father's unshaven cheek against the wetness of his own.

"Lis'sen, dear'r," Jim murmured, as he had not murmured to this child for many years.

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The Stubborn Film on Teeth to Which Science Ascribes Many Tooth and Gum Disorders. What Numbers of Authorities Suggest Doing for It

BY running your tongue across your teeth, a film will be felt—a slippery sort of coating. Recent dental research proves that film a chief enemy of healthy teeth and gums—the source of most dull teeth, a chief cause of many gum disturbances. Because old ways of brushing failed to remove film successfully, a new way in tooth and gum care is being widely suggested by dental authorities—a way embodied in the special film-removing dentifrice called Pepsodent.

Now an Effective Film-Removing Tooth Paste

For years dental science sought ways to fight film. Clear teeth and healthy gums come only when film is constantly combated.

Film was found to cling to teeth; to get into crevices and stay; to hold in contact with teeth food substances which fermented and fostered the acids of decay.

Film was found to be the basis of tartar. Germs by the millions breed in it. And they, with tartar, are the chief cause of pyorrhea and most gum disorders.

Thus there was a universal call for an effective film-removing method. Ordinary brushing was found ineffective.

Now two effective combatants have been found, approved by high dental authority, and embodied in the film-removing tooth paste called Pepsodent.

Curdles and Removes Film. Firms the Gums

Pepsodent acts first to curdle the film. Then it thoroughly removes the film in gentle safety to enamel.

At the same time, it acts to firm the gums — Pepsodent provides, for this purpose, the most recent dental findings in gum protection science knows today.

Pepsodent also multiplies the alkalinity of the saliva. And thus aids in neutralizing mouth acids as they form. It multiplies the starch digestant of the saliva. And thus combats starch deposits which might otherwise ferment and form acids.

Please Accept Pepsodent Test

Send the coupon for a 10-day tube. Brush teeth this way for 10 days. Note how teeth gradually lighten as film coats go. Then for 10 nights massage the gums with Pepsodent, using your finger tips; the gums then should start to firm and harden.

At the end of that time, we believe you will agree, that next to regular dental care, Pepsodent, the quality dentifrice, provides the utmost science has discovered for better tooth and gum protection.

FREE—Mail coupon for 10-day tube to The Pepsodent Company, Dept. 990, 1104 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill., U. S. A. Only one tube to a family.

Name.....

Address.....

.....2279



"You didn't mane nothin'. Tell your mama you didn't mane nothin'. Tell Mama you're sorry, Vic. Papa knows you're sorry. Katy, don't be so mad at him, mavourneen——"

Kate said nothing. In silence she unhooked the dreadful strap. The little girls gasped and the old woman drew in her breath with a sharply apprehensive and agonized sound of sucking.

Jim, shrinking, kept his arms tightly about his son. "Now, lis'sen, Katy, now lis'sen just a moment," he began rapidly, and defensively. "Let's act reasonable—there's no such hurry to half kill the child, dear'r. The other boy had no *clock* in his kitchen—an' although Vic's old enough, God knows, that he'd kape the time in his mind—— Katy, just a minute——"

"He'll get a hidin' that he'll rimimber the longest day he lives," Kate said, and laid a heavy hand upon Vic's shoulder. Victor moaned. Jim—not ungently—pushed it off.

"Katy," he said pleadingly, "will you leave Papa beg him off, just this once? Will you give him just one more chanst becuz Papa ast you? Will you, Katy? He'll never scare you again, I'll go bail! You'll be the best kid she ever seen from now on, won't you, Vicky?"

Vic was beyond speech. But a convulsive plunging of his wet face into his father's neck, and a convulsive tightening of his pipe-stem arms about his father's throat, indicated a heartfelt response.

Kate's eyes filled. She hesitated, looking from Jim's intent face to the strap in her hand, irresolute.

"I'd made up me mind——" she began, with a dark flash of a glance toward the treasured phonograph. Jim interrupted her quickly.

"Katy, don't say annythin' you'd want maybe to go back on, an' be sorry for!" he warned her. "Let's l'ave it as it is, just this time, an' see what kind of a boy he's goin' to be, from this on! Why, here," Jim went on adroitly, with a great air of cheer and congratulation, "here we all are, well an' lovin' each other, be the grace of God, an' wit' this fine dinner—beets an' puddin' all waitin'—an' 'Herself' very bright and collected, God preserve her to us!—an' why wudden't we all set down, an' ask a grace, an' eat—an' l'ave all unpleasantness to the Turks an' Bulgarians an' thim that has no God, an' lives by fightin' an' uproar?"

Kate appeared impressed by this burst of what was, for Jim, unwonted eloquence. She stood, arrested rather than mollified, fingering the instrument of punishment.

Jim steadied his son upon his feet, and gave him a gentle push toward Kate.

"Go kiss your mother an' tell her you're sorry," he directed boldly. Vic, somewhat doubtfully, obeyed, and Kate threw down the strap, knelt down, and embraced the penitent, still without much softening of her dark face.

"If you didn't have the best papa God ever made——" she said somberly in an unsatisfied voice.

"I know it, Mom!" said little Vic fervently.

Jim helped his old mother tenderly to the table; smiled furtively and swiftly in answer to Vic's furtive, swift smile, as the little boy squeezed in beside him.

The muffins and fish-cakes and beets, the tea, smoking hot, the pudding, glazed and brown, all went onto the table. Chairs were jerked, heads bowed; grace was said.

"Mom," said Bernadette, virtuously feeding Helen, "I can't remember what 'diplomacy' means—an' Sister's awful mean about it if we don't look up our words—honest she is, Mom—honest she is."

"Well, eat your dinner now," Kate interrupted the rising whine comfortingly, "an' tomorra' we'll ask someone. I haven't a very clear idea of it, meself, an' small loss to me, for it's little I'd have need of it for, if I knew all there was to it!" she added, with her contented laugh. "Diplomacy—there's a wor'rd for ye, now! Diplomacy, indeed; I don't belave it'd help *me* much, wit' me houseful of kids an' dishes!" said Kate.

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This simple food conquers constipation, corrects skin and stomach disorders in an easy, natural way



NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active, daily releasing new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day, one before each meal: on crackers, in fruit juices, water or milk—or just plain, in small pieces. *For constipation dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before meals and at bedtime. Dangerous habit-forming cathartics will gradually become unnecessary.* All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days.

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THOMAS STAPLETON, San Francisco, Calif.

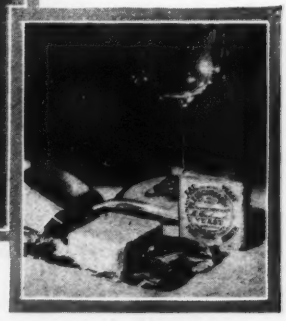


"FOR THIRTY-FIVE YEARS I HAD BEEN A VICTIM OF INDIGESTION. Then I began eating three cakes of Fleischmann's Yeast regularly every day. In two weeks I began to improve and now I can indulge myself with *anything* I wish to eat."

J. A. RITCHEY, Baltimore, Md.

"I BECAME VERY RUN DOWN. As a ballet dancer the demands upon my energy were too great. I suffered from loss of vitality. After a performance I would be so tired I could hardly walk. I was advised to try Fleischmann's Yeast. I did so. In a few weeks I noticed a remarkable improvement. Now my energy is completely restored and I feel well in every way."

HARRIETTE G. BENDLE, New York City.



THIS FAMOUS FOOD tones up the entire system—aids digestion—clears the skin—banishes constipation.

The Second Husband *by Don Marquis* (Continued from page 57)

blamed business—and I'll mind mine.'

" 'You got no call to get so riled, Pete,' I says. But Pete got up and cussed to himself and went out, leavin' half a glass of good beer on the table.

"It was less than a year after that that Pete was killed in a most peculiar and aggravatin' kind of way. There was an old well onto the Ackles place that was one of the first wells dug in this part of the country. Lots of people near the swamp had a good deal of trouble with their wells, gettin' 'em dug down deep enough so as to be below surface-water and seepage. It ain't so hard now that they drive down iron pipes and get below everything; they can go clean to China if they want to. But the Ackles well was put down in the old days of dug wells, and there was a lot of trouble with dug wells around there. They had to be deep, and they had to be lined and shored up inside with brick or stone to keep seepage and underground currents and surface-water out of 'em. And they was always cavin' in, and havin' to be cleaned out again and fixed up; the fact is, out on the edge of the swamp, until you get down to a good deep depth there are places where you can't strike solid ground; you go through sandy places and shifty places. But when you do go down far enough you get good water.

"The Ackles well was deep, and it had good water; but it was old. Lots of the stones and bricks had dropped out of the sides of it and fell to the bottom, and a lot more was loose and ready to drop. The fac's is, it looked like it might cave in at any time, if anybody done any scramblin' around down there.

"Two or three times I heard discussions about that well, and once right here in the back room of Jake Smith's Palace Hotel I heard Lem and Pete talkin' about it. Lem was tellin' Pete as much stock as they had on the place they needed a constant flow of good water, and Pete was lookin' glum and sayin' nothing. And one day Fred Perkins, that use' to do that kind of work around here, was sent for by Lem, and went out and took a look at it, and refused to go down into it, or let a man go down into it for him. Fred says to me:

" 'Clem, money's money; and a job is a job; but it's been my experience and observation that them as are dead has got no use for neither one. And I told Lem Ackles I wouldn't go down into that hole in the ground for love nor for money; I got the ambition, if I'm goin' to be buried, to be planted in the cemetery, instead of at the bottom of Lem Ackles's well.'

" 'What did Lem say when you told him?' I asts Fred.

" 'All he said was that it's got to be cleaned; and I told him he better take a chance on it himself, he couldn't hire nobody to do it, unless it was a born fool.'

"It was about a week afterwards that Pete Henderson went down into that well and never come up until he was hauled up dead.

"I won't say how Lem got him to go down. Maybe he ordered him to do it and scared him into it and bullied him until he done it. Maybe he shamed and taunted him into doin' it—and it might be he done it thataway, for there used to be a breed of hired hands in this country had such pride in their work they wouldn't be stumped on nothing. Anyway, what Pete said and what Lem said and what Myra said, nobody ever will know, exactly.

"I will admit that I tried to find out, from time to time, from both Lem and Myra, but I never got aye, yes or no out of neither one of 'em. Maybe Myra helped shame him into goin' down into that well. If so be that is true, the conscience on the inside of her must at times be as hot as the red hair on the outside of her. But I'm willin' to believe that Myra never went so far that she couldn't make some kind of excuses to herself. What was in her heart, it's possible she never let get into her head.

"But there ain't no doubt of what was in Lem Ackles's heart when he sent Pete Henderson down into that well—though there must 'a' been years when he denied it to himself. But he ain't denyin' it any longer. I'll tell you about that pretty soon. Lem was standin' at the top of the well himself when the brick fell that killed Pete. And it wasn't one of the bricks down half-way towards the bottom. It was one of the bricks off the old crumblin' curb itself. I ain't sayin' that Lem kicked it. Not on purpose.

"I ain't even sayin' that he looked the other way, and let his foot kick it. I ain't even sayin' that he just let his foot play and trifle with the idea of kickin' it. The fac's is, that it don't make any difference whether Lem's foot ever touched that brick or not, because if it hadn't been that brick, it would 'a' been some other brick. That well wasn't safe, and Lem knowed it wasn't and all the years since then when he's been tryin' for spells to tell himself different, he has known in his heart that he was lyin'. Whether he touched that brick with his foot, or whether he didn't, he had touched that brick with his wish.

"There wasn't much trouble, nor no lawsuit or anything, not even an inquest. Pete wasn't anything but a hired hand; and he got killed by an accident, and that's all there was to it. But when Lem and Myra got married, people did say they ought to waited more than three months: and when their first child was born six or seven months later, and died when it was two weeks old, I couldn't help thinkin' of King David and Uriah and Mrs. Uriah.

"And lots of people begun to recollect as soon as they was married that that well hadn't been safe. If they hadn't got married, and got married so quick, nobody ever would 'a' thought so much of that fact.

"Still and all, there was less talk than might 'a' been expected, for about that time Lem Ackles begun to be a very wealthy man. He'd owned, besides the old Ackles place, a good many hundreds of acres of swamp-land. It wasn't worth much. The best of it could be bought cheap, and some of the wettest of it nobody would take as a gift.

"But you remember yourself when they began to dreen the swamp—all them dredgers and ditchers snortin' around through the country. And pretty soon that land was raisin' the best crops in the world. Lem Ackles was long-headed. Instead of sellin' when the dreenage begun, he bought more. You know the whole story yourself—how it went up till now the price on some of it is just plumb incredulous.

"And afore long Lem Ackles was rich, big rich. And in a couple years Myra begun to get right ambitious. She used to drag Lem with her to New York, and they'd stay a couple weeks at a time, seein' all the shows in the big opery-houses there, and that kind of thing, and buyin' herself clothes. And then she done what was considered a funny thing for a married woman—she just picked up and went to college for a couple years. She tried to drag Lem with her, but he wouldn't go. Nor she couldn't never get him to go and live in some big city, like she wanted to. But he never seemed to make any objections to her goin' away for spells, two or three months at a time; which was also considered a kind of a funny thing for a married couple. But far's I could see, there wasn't any reason why she shouldn't.

"They never had any more kids, after the one that died. And nobody ever knowed whether that one was Pete's or Lem's, anyhow.

"I asted Myra once, but she was plumb impolite in her answer. I never been a person to meddle in my neighbors' affairs, so I never asted her again. But the point is she never had any family to look after exceptin' Lem himself, and there wasn't any reason why she shouldn't go off on trips. It was once reported she had went to Europe, but I never could quite make up my mind to believe that onto her. I always kinda liked Myra.

"People talked a little when they noticed Lem and Myra filled up the well in the front yard where Pete had died. But they wouldn't have talked if Lem hadn't talked—he was always uneasy about that well, and tellin' folks how bad he felt about Pete, and so forth. He seemed like he felt called on to say something about that well, at some time or other, to everybody he knew. When he filled it up, and got an iron pipe well drove down near by, he explained to everybody right and left that he needed a good windmill on the old home place to take care of all his stock. And there's no doubt he did, and nobody would 'a' thought much if he hadn't explained it so often.

"A year or two after the well had been filled in, and the place where it used to be sodded over, the ground sunk there, and left the outline of the old well. Maybe you've seen an old grave in the graveyard that's sunk that way, two or three feet, and left a hollow instead of a mound. Well, when it sunk it kinda reminded people of that.

"Lem, he had the sod ripped off, and more fillin' put in, and the sod laid down again. But the sod didn't take so well. And there it was marked out to sight in the front yard. Myra planted a flower-bed there, but it never done much. Then there was a grape-vine set out there, but it never done anything. And it sunk again. There wasn't any wonder it sunk. As I said before, the ground is still kind of shifty and slidin' out on the edge of the swamp. There didn't seem to be anything Myra and Lem could do with that well to make it behave itself and quit bein' noticeable.

"Fred Perkins says to me one day, 'You know that old well of Lem's sort of reminds me of an old wound that's got a thin skin of scar over the surface of it, but keeps bustin' loose again from time to time.'

"But there wasn't never much general talk—just little neighborly kind of chats about it, all these years, like between Fred Perkins and me. This town has got a kind of a bad name as a gossipy place, but there ain't so many here would ever say much right out direct to Lem and Myra, that would hurt their feelings, them bein' so rich and all that.

"About three years ago Myra quit makin' her trips and tours hither and yon. And about the same time Lem took to stayin' home entirely. There ain't a dozen people seen Lem in the last three years, scarcely. I always kinda kep' in touch with him myself; not that I got any more curiosity than the average run of people—but I'm interested. I'm interested in seein' our own home folks right here work their stories out just the same as the Good Book stories, so to speak. And every time I seen Lem he's looked a little ailin'. It's no wonder Myra feels like she's got to stay home and take care of him. She's rich enough to send off and get a trained nurse. But she don't. Maybe she thinks Lem might say something that wouldn't be too tactful, or talk too much about that well in the front yard.

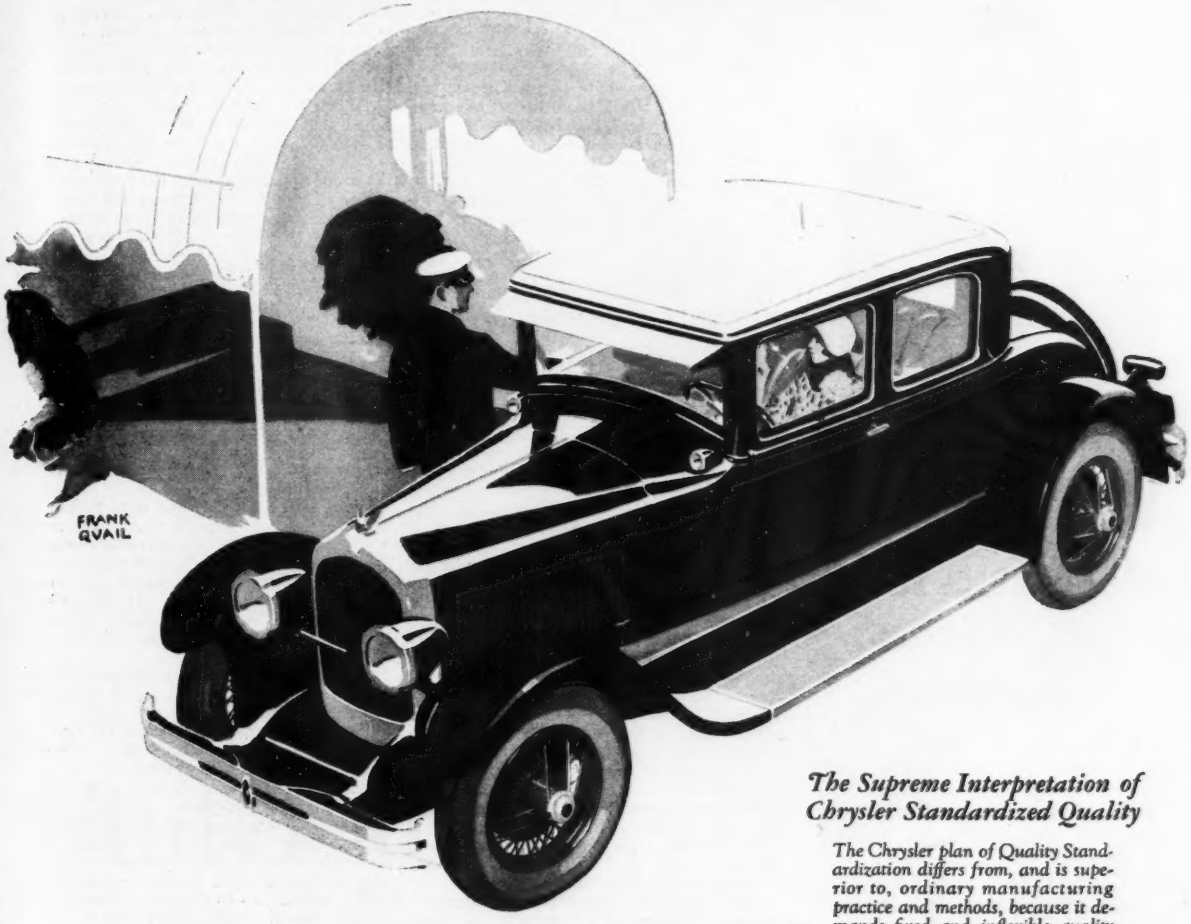
"About the time Lem quit seein' people he had a big board fence built all in front of the house. I suppose he didn't want passers-by to see that well. It's been gettin' more and more like a corn on his brain. But that well ain't goin' to be there much longer. It was only day afore yesterday I went out to the old Ackles place, and when I got through the board fence I seen something was going on.

"Lem had three men and a dredgin'-machine to work in the front yard. They had begun to dig about a hundred yards away from the well, and they were diggin' towards it. They were diggin' down in big steps, or you might say terraces, and the way the work was aimed I could see that the idea was to hit the bottom of the old well with the last step.

" 'Lem,' I says, "that's a most peculiar kind of stair steps you're diggin' across the yard.'

" 'Yes,' he says, 'stair steps is the word. Stair steps is what they are.'

"And he kind of sighs and clinches his hands, and his eyes has a kind of a queer glitter.



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A Bottle-full of *after-shaving* Comfort

WE make talcs but we don't recommend them for use after shaving. They tend to blot up the skin's natural moisture so vital for after-shaving comfort. So we offer you Aqua Velva, an amber-clear liquid, *made especially for use after shaving*. It helps the skin retain its natural moisture all day long.

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Send the coupon or a postcard for a generous test bottle FREE. The large five ounce bottle at your dealer's is 50c (60c in Canada). By mail postpaid in case he is out of it.

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Send free test bottle of Aqua Velva.

Cosmo.—1-27

"'What's the stair steps for, 'Lem?' I asts him.

"Myra had come out the front door and was listenin' to us.

"'Why, they're for Pete,' says Lem. 'For Pete Henderson. You knew Pete, didn't you, Clem? They're so's Pete Henderson can get out of that well. He's been down there nigh onto twenty-one years, Pete has.'

"He passed his hand over his forehead in a queer kind of way, and then he seen Myra, and he put his finger to his lips and says in a whisper: 'Don't say anything to Myra about it, Clem. I always kept it all from her that he was still down there.'

"'You and Clem come into the house,' says Myra, layin' her hand onto his arm.

"He looked at Myra in a queer sort of a way, and then he turns to me and says, 'Yes, come on in. I want to tell you about Pete—about Pete Henderson and his wife. There's people says I kicked that brick. Well, I didn't. Pete knows I wouldn't do that. I'm goin' to get Pete out of that well, and he can tell them I wouldn't. Pete ain't easy down there.'

"I didn't go into the house. I went away. I had a notion maybe Myra didn't want me to come in. Well, that's the end of the story."

But even as Mr. Hawley finished speaking, the coupé appeared around the bend and came up Main Street in a nimbus of sunlit dust. The red-haired lady stopped in front of us. She was pale, but her head was still high, and defiant, and her eyes were straight and steady.

"Is Doc Tompkins in the hotel?" she asked Mr. Hawley. "Help me find him. Lem has been taken with—with an attack of some kind."

Yes Man's Land (*Continued from page 79*)

Helene. "Cosmetics stimulate matrimony and increase the birth-rate, too. And as for *your* noble sex, a good half-million males are using cosmetics secretly!"

"I'm a man and *I* don't use them, secretly or otherwise!" I announced.

"Pardon you—I said males, not *men!*" she answered sweetly.

I imagine Helene has about as many illusions about men as a trained nurse.

Returning to the Fitz-Charlton, I went directly to Father's rooms to await him. On a sudden impulse I gave my *magnum opus*, "A Circus Romance," to Miami to read. Father's suave valet, who doubled on occasion as butler and secretary, gave the manuscript flattering attention and at the end gravely assured me that my story was indeed a masterpiece. Such is the influence of the movies, when the mere reading of a scenario made Miami a Yes-Man!

We were discussing the plot when Father appeared, whistling blithely.

"Ah, Arthur—still busy doing nothing, I see," he greeted me. "Remember, my boy, all temptations attack the idle!"

"It is better to be idle than to do wrong!" I parried with the old Latin proverb. "I think your attentions to that Le Brie woman were positively disgusting! The idea of——"

"Peace!" commanded Father sternly, though his eyes were twinkling. "I rendered your beautiful Helene a service. Miss Le Brie—not 'that Le Brie woman'—was justifiably angry and would have sued the Mayfair Beauty Shoppe for heavy damages as the result of that accident had I not intervened. It strikes *me* that my appearance was most opportune!"

As indeed it was, there was no adequate argument I could give my quick-thinking pater on *that* score. So I cleared my throat and commending myself to the gods, launched my attack.

"Father," I began, "how would you like to go into the movies?"

"They hurt my eyes," he answered. "I prefer the speaking stage."

"I do not mean as a spectator, I mean as a producer!" I blurted out impatiently.

"As a—Arthur, just what leads you to believe I am demented?" he sharply demanded.

At the end of an hour I had persuaded him at least to read "A Circus Romance." He did so with unaffected interest and then, rubbing his hands together and beaming on me, he said he was afraid my scenario was a success! To verify his own opinion, he added, he desired a friend who was versed in these matters to peruse it—for the rest, he promised nothing.

That night he took Astaire Le Brie to a revue and afterwards to his favorite supper club. Then the fun began!

At noon the following day I lunched with Father at his request and dropped a demi-tasse in my lap when without preliminary he told me he had decided personally to produce "A Circus Romance," *starring Astaire Le Brie!* I was torn between gratitude and chagrin, but although I protested until I was hoarse, Father's ultimatum was Astaire or no picture. Furious, I gave in at last. I would have agreed to almost *anything* to see my first brain-child on the screen!

Once his course was laid out, Father was never one to procrastinate and things moved with dazzling speed. A studio was engaged in the vast reaches of Long Island where men are commuters, a director, camera men, supporting cast and what not engaged. It was with the director that I had my first clash. He sought me out on the big stage the first day of actual "shooting."

"You're the baby which concocted this bedtime story, ain't you?" he asked quizzically.

I proudly confessed to the charge.

"Well, my name's Eddie, but they call me E. Harold Van Berlenbach for short," he went on. "Now about this main title, 'A Circus Romance'—that's out! It don't mean nothin' and it's terrible box-office. We'll call it 'Sawdust and Sin' and panic the yokels, what?"

"But there's no sin in it!" I protested.

"We'll trade a little sawdust for some!" said this master mind. "Listen—I was in this movie racket when Famous Players meant Sousa's Band. Leave everything to me, I know my delicatessen, kid!"

And, hang it all, I heard myself saying, "*Yes*, Mr. Van Berlenbach!"

Astaire Le Brie appeared at the studio two hours late and attended by the retinue of an empress—all supplied by Father. Part of the royal suite consisted of two maids, a secretary and three of those ghastly toy lap-dogs. Her mother, equally obvious, painted and noisy, accompanied her, and, planting herself in a chair beside the fuming director, she remained there hurling gratuitous suggestions at him from morning until night.

Jack wandered over one day, coming to jeer and remaining to domineer. The handsome vermin exterminator had a decided flair for inventing droll situations and after several of his slap-stick comedy *coups* had been utilized by Van Berlenbach, Jack was engaged as "gag man," doubling on occasion as an extra. This, however, failed to break down his congenital cynicism. To Jacques, everything was "All moist!" and he was the only one in the studio that I ever heard say "No!" to our director. Plainly impressed with his comeliness, Astaire flirted outrageously with Jack in my parent's absence, but Jack paid her scant attention.

The first week passed swiftly, the only delays being caused by Astaire's daily tardiness in arriving on the "set." I was enchanted by the motion-picture studio *milieu*, as new to me as the atmosphere of the South Pole. True, the director and myself had many spirited arguments when he insisted upon changing scene after scene as written in my scenario. He knew what the public wanted, he declared, and as Father's money was at stake I eventually gave in. By the end of the second week, virtually nothing remained of my original story, but when Van Berlenbach suggested substituting "Hilary De Vere" as a



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more striking name than my own for use as author of the picture, I uttered my first and emphatic "No!" The astonishment on the faces of the others was most amusing.

During this period I called upon Helene almost every evening, keeping her posted on the progress of our production. Of course she was greatly interested and so was Aubrey, the female impersonator, who had lately closed his season in vaudeville.

"Just how good a trouper is this Le Brie entry?" asked Helene one evening. "She told me she'd been with Flo Ziegfeld a few years ago and——"

"I never knew Ziegfeld run a laundry!" snorted Jack. "Why, Aubrey here can make up like Mrs. Venus alongside of Arthur's old man's playmate. She's no bargain!"

"Wouldn't it be grand if Aubrey *was* in that movie?" murmured Helene.

"No sooner said than done!" exclaimed Jack, jumping up. "Arthur's a writin' fool and I'm the next thing to peerless as a gag man—what it takes I got in barrelfuls. We'll cook up some scenes for Aubrey!"

"But——" I began doubtfully.

"Sssh, let's keep this frolic in the family!" interrupted Jack. "Aubrey, be on the set at eight sharp tomorrow mornin', all made up and ready to labor!"

So *that* was all settled.

As a matter of fact, Aubrey proved a find indeed and our director soon became enthusiastic about him. Again my beloved scenario was changed to permit the introduction of a female impersonator and later Aubrey doubled for Astaire Le Brie in all the stunt scenes. Garbed and made up as our timid star, Aubrey swam rapids, jumped from bridges, wrecked automobiles, rode runaway horses and generally risked his life for the sake of art. While we all showered him with praise for his reckless heroism, Astaire and her mother grew increasingly jealous. Aubrey was, they complained, "Stealing the picture!"

It soon became apparent that whatever her other gifts might be, Astaire Le Brie was by no stretch of the imagination an actress. Possessed of a beautiful figure, she insisted upon having scenes written in that would permit her to display her charms almost *au naturel*, in one-piece bathing suits and filmy negligées. Frequently I dressed her with a look! At her demand, an eight-piece orchestra played "Valencia" over and over again while she emoted, until Van Berlenbach and the actors supporting her were driven to the brink of insanity. She insisted upon a gorgeous and terrifically expensive ballroom scene when there was no reason for one in the story and in that unnecessary sequence she performed an equally unnecessary Charleston. It was with great difficulty that we persuaded her to abandon her intention of taking the whole company to Hollywood for the concluding scenes. Astaire's mother, our director's *bête noire*, called her remarkable daughter "Baby!"

When E. Harold Van Berlenbach told me one day after a particularly violent debate with Astaire that he was through, I induced him to come to Helene's apartment that evening for a conference. I did not include Father in the gathering as, still under the spell of this Circe, he had informed me that Astaire was "Marvelous, my boy, *marvelous!*" after a few visits to the studio.

"Well, what's wrong with this picture?" smiled Helene as we sat down in her parlor.

"Astaire Le Brie!" snarled our director. "That snapper can only think for five feet of fillum. Her brains is always on location. She's one of them Stupid Sarahs which would open a telephone book at the last page just to see how it ended!"

"Aubrey's been a life-saver for the movie!" added Jack, in a low growl.

"I hope to tell you!" confirmed Van Berlenbach. "If we ever *do* grab a release for this hokum, Aubrey'll be the one to thank. I wouldn't fool you, I'm satisfied it's goin' to cost the old man his bank-roll and cost me my reputation. I wish we could lose that dame!"

"And we can!" roared Jack suddenly. "I just got my annual rush of brains to the head. Hark ye—let's rebuild the picture around Aubrey and retouch Astaire out of it entirely!"

"Hey, hey!" cried Helene.

"Impossible!" I said, but hope was struggling within me.

"Nothin's impossible to men of *my* ilk!" Jack retorted. "Here's the gag—we go to work and let Aubrey play Astaire's part without her knowin' a thing about it. We fake all her scenes—let Heaven's gift to the silver screen act, *but no celluloid in the old camera.* Don't tip nobody else, and Aubrey can play her part when she ain't on hand!"

"It's our only hope to make a movie out of this flop, Big Boy!" said Van Berlenbach, turning on me. "And if you don't cuddle up to Jack's scheme, I'm goin' to cop a sneak and that's cold turkey!"

Jack, Aubrey and the director raved, pleaded and threatened for a good half-hour and I said "No!" Helene laid her little white hand on my arm, squeezed it and smiled, "Please—*dear!*" And I said "Yes!"

As the time for the big circus climax approached, the menagerie engaged by Father took up quarters on our lot. Jack inspected the cages with interest and finally stopped dead before one.

"Hey, lookey here, Art!" he called to me. "What's *this* nightmare?"

I strode to his side and observed the interior of the cage.

"Ah—*myrmecophaga jubata!*" I said. "A South American ant-eater."

The vermin exterminator's eyes gleamed.

"A ant-eater, hey?" he gasped delightedly. "A *ant-eater!* Well, burn my clothes! Where have *you* been all my life, animal?"

The edentate actually appeared to be regarding him in a most friendly manner.

"D'ye suppose this baby is house-broke?" asked Jack, almost feverishly.

"The trainer said all the animals were perfectly domesticated and could be handled by children," I assured him smilingly.

"Hot dam!" Jack fairly howled. "A honest-to-Kansas ant-eater, and tame at that! Look at the snout on it! I wish I had that nose full of dimes, what I mean. Art, old top, reclinin' idly in that straw before you is your future brother-in-law's future!"

That same night the ant-eater was reported missing by the worried trainer and although the big lot was scoured, as was the surrounding neighborhood, no trace of the animal could be found. The next evening I was having dinner with Helene and Aubrey in their apartment when Helene went to the door in answer to a ring. Her frightened scream brought Aubrey and myself instantly to her side, to gasp in alarmed amazement. For there stood Jack, grinning from ear to ear, and holding by a stout steel chain the missing ant-eater!

"C'mon in, Clarice, and meet the folks!" Jack addressed the animal, which clumped after him like a great, unwieldy dog.

"For heaven's sake, take that horrible thing away from here!" cried Helene. "Do you think this is the zoo?"

"Be your age!" returned Jack calmly. "You're now gazin' on Clarice, a ant-eatin' idiot if they ever was one! Me and my little girl friend here, which simply dotes on me, is goin' to make a million bucks riddin' the world of ants. I take Clarice into a joint, show her the ants and say, 'Go on, kid, do your stuff—alley up!' Clunk—the ants is down her quiverin' tongue and I'm on my ways with a fistful of doubloons! Pretty soft, hey?"

Aubrey glared at his brother and patted the trembling Helene reassuringly.

"You should have more sense than to frighten Sister like this!" he exclaimed. "What kind of an ant-eater is that? Brazilian or——"

"Clarice is what you call a full-fledged carpenter ant-eater!" said Jack. "Kick her in the ribs and she'll make a bolt for the door!"

Jack's next move was to phone Father that he had "found" the ant-eater, which happy circumstance the exterminator of vermin said he regarded as an act of God. With the assistance of Clarice he would hang up a record as an ant destroyer that would stand for all time and incidentally make him financially independent. We could plainly hear Father's howls of glee through the receiver. A vermin exterminator with a trained ant-eater appealed so much to my parent's sense of humor that he bought the animal for Jack forthwith. Helene's enterprising brother then departed with his rather extraordinary pet to find quarters for it.

The last two reels of "Sawdust and Sin" were photographed on "location," in this instance, Father's $300,000 yacht Everglade. Helene accompanied us on the sea trip, both as an extremely interested spectator and as part of the "atmosphere" in several dramatic scenes. There was nothing in my original scenario that called for a yacht, but when our talented director learned Father possessed one, he simply wrote it in.

Off Fire Island we ran into a severe squall, bobbing around like a cork in the choppy, foaming water. The downpour drenched us all very thoroughly before we could find shelter in the lounge and Astaire Le Brie became quite definitely seasick. Bedraggled, irritable and with her make-up washed off in ludicrous streaks by the rain, our star presented a most unkempt appearance. Father's mad infatuation seemed to cool at that precise moment and in frowning whispers to me he compared Astaire with Helene, whose arresting beauty remained unscathed by the angry elements. Jack sardonically remarked that Astaire ran a temperature every time she looked at Helene.

"Sawdust and Sin" was finally completed at a cost of some ninety thousand dollars, and even with the numerous changes in my scenario I am sure it would have been a huge success but for one thing, namely, we could not get a release for the film. I literally peddled it from one organization to another along Broadway and the last gentleman I interviewed advised me to cut it to two thousand feet and try it as a two-reel comedy.

Eventually we went that suggestion one better. We cut it into six uproarious segments and released it as a two-reel comedy series. The returns were negligible—ask Dad, he knows!

Father took his loss philosophically, but he declared in no uncertain tones that he had his fill of producing motion-pictures. That made two of us who were cured! I let him see the scenes Astaire Le Brie had appeared in before we substituted Aubrey and Father agreed with me that this elimination had helped, even though Astaire, through her mother, was threatening a damage suit.

A day or so later Father's valet rapped at the door of my room adjoining the pater's luxurious chambers at the Fitz-Charlton. I let him in, surprised at his evident agitation—Miami was usually a sphinx.

"I'm a bit distressed about your father, sir," he said gravely. "Mr. Justin dispatched me to his bankers this morning for a matter of fifty thousand dollars in cash. Upon my return, he put the money in a satchel and departed. He was to be back within the hour. That was *five* hours ago, sir!"

"Oh, there's nothing to be concerned about, Miami," I rejoined lightly. "Father is probably closing some deal that required that amount in ready cash. He——"

"That's just what I'm afraid of, sir, begging your pardon," interrupted Miami. "His appointment was with that—eh—he went to the apartment of Miss Le Brie and her mother!"

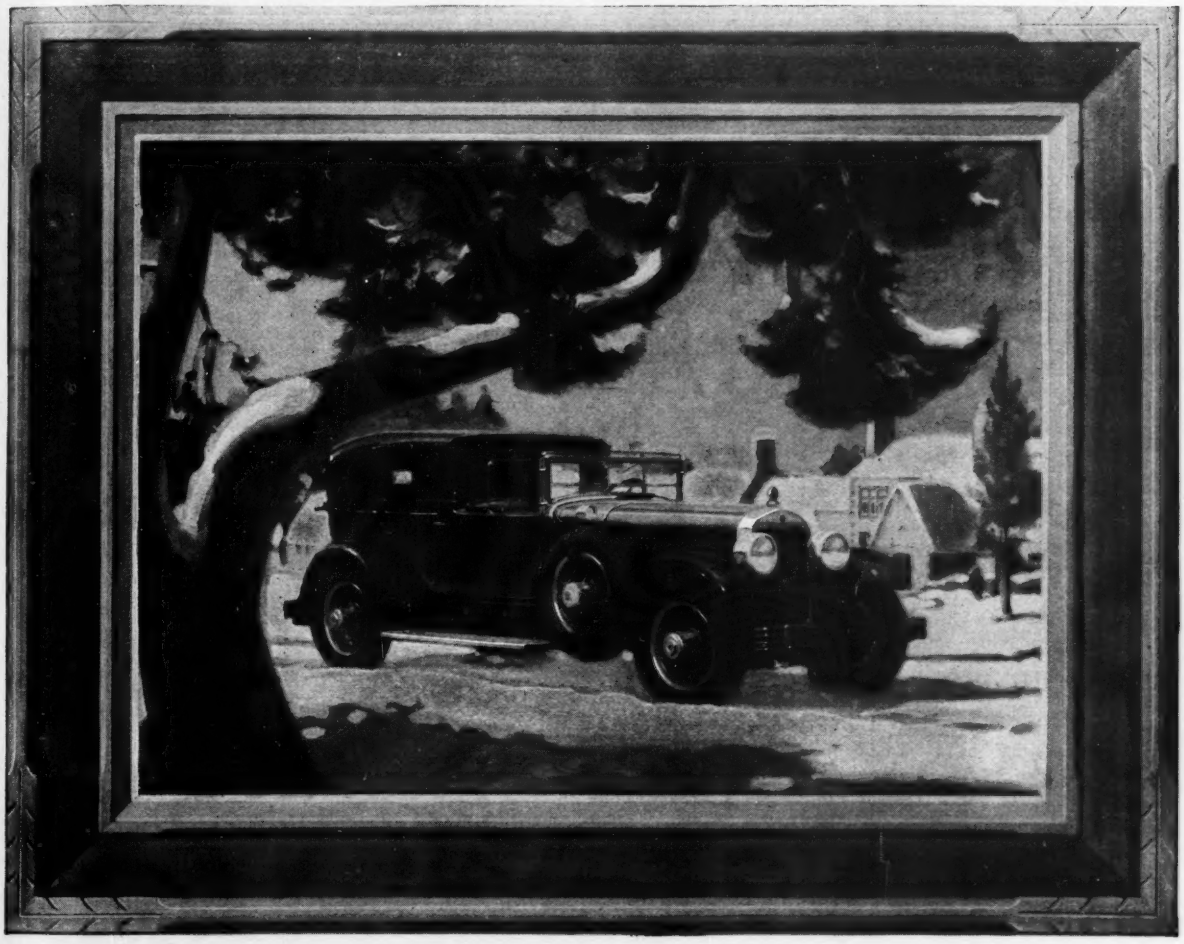
"*What?*" I ejaculated, in unfeigned alarm.

"Yes, sir!" resumed Miami. "They visited Mr. Justin yesterday and—and—well, sir, they had quite a heated discussion. Most heated, I should say, sir!"

"You did well to come to me, Miami. Get me Mr. Jack Howe on the telephone at once!" I cried.

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir!" said Miami. "The minute those ladies drank their Scotch neat, sir, I was on me toes, sir!"

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Worriedly I sketched the situation for Jack and he instantly agreed with me that there was a Senegambian in the wood-pile.

"Will you come with me to the Royal Arms Apartments and help me stop Father from giving those harpies that money?" I begged.

"Absolutely!" he answered. "They'll cross your old man like Trudie Ederle crossed the Channel. Wait till I get my ant-eater. This couldn't of broke better, Art! I got a exterminatin' contract at that Royal Arms dump, so I'll haul Clarice up in a sedan and have her bear down on the ants whilst we're bearin' down on them dames!"

I met Jack and his "girl friend" outside the Royal Arms and while the vermin exterminator went to find the freight elevator to bring Clarice to the upper floors, I hastened to Astaire Le Brie's apartment. Jack arrived as I was still banging futilely on the door, behind which there had been a shuffle of feet and vague exclamations—then an ominous silence. Leaving the ant-eater in the hall, we threw our combined three-hundred and seventy-five pounds against the door. The third time it gave way and we were precipitated bodily into a large room.

The first thing that met my frantic gaze was Father prostrate on a couch, breathing heavily and with much difficulty. He had obviously been drugged and a brief examination disclosed that his valuable watch, cuff links and scarf-pin were missing. Astaire Le Brie, her mother and a trio of hard-looking thugs stood by in tense, threatening attitudes. One of the gangsters held Father's satchel containing the fifty thousand dollars, while the other two covered us with wicked-looking automatics.

"Beat it, chumps, or we'll cook you!" snarled one of the men.

"You won't cook nothin', ape!" howled Jack and hurled a chair at them.

"Don't give 'em the cannon—the bulls'll hear it!" hissed Astaire's mother and they all dashed madly for the door. I floored one of the men with a fortunate blow to the jaw and rushed to the window, from which I espied two policemen on the pavement below gazing up curiously. Yelling to them for aid, I wheeled around and found the room empty of all but Jack, who was tenderly feeling a gash on his forehead where one of the thieves had hit him with a gun.

"Hang it all!" I exclaimed bitterly. "We should have been armed or brought detectives with us! They've got away clean with Father's fifty thousand, his jewelry and——"

I was interrupted by a succession of earsplitting and unearthly shrieks from the hall and immediately in dashed the two women and the three thugs, wild-eyed and panting. Behind them, saber-like claws bared and long, prehensile tongue curling viciously, lumbered Clarice, the ant-eater!

"Save us!" implored the panic-stricken Astaire and her mother, while the gunmen crouched, white-faced and petrified, against the farthest corners of the room.

"Nice work, Clarice!" guffawed Jack, patting his pet's head. "You're goin' to be a big help to me when you grow up. Hello, coppers!"

In the doorway stood the two policemen, revolvers drawn and an amusing expression of astonishment on their faces.

Father was sitting up now, blinking around dizzily.

"What the—what's the big idea, hey?" growled one of the officers.

"Arrest those men and women!" I cried. "I charge them with assault and robbery. They lured my father here, drugged him and robbed him of fifty thousand dollars!"

"We know this mob!" said the other policeman. "We been tipped they was pullin' a job here—you guys done a good day's work nailin' 'em! Them two dames poses as mother and daughter and hey, what the Jersey City's this wild beast doin' here?"

"That ain't no wild beast!" grinned Jack urbanely. "That's Clarice, the charmin' ant-eater which caught them stick-ups, brother! I'm a vermin exterminator, get me, and as this gang is all rats I was simply usin' up-to-date methods. Here's my card—if you ever want the station-house cleared of ants and the like, give me and Clarice a ring!"

A Free Soul *by Adela Rogers St. Johns* (*Continued from page 97*)

brief. You stay away from my wife. I have not wanted to say it. You have forced it upon me. Stay away from her. You don't know much about men of my sort, maybe, but I reckon you can figure out what I mean by that."

Dwight Sutro filled his big brandy glass to the top and drank it off. The brandy stimulated imagination, visualization—and courage.

"I am not much in the habit," he said nastily, "of discussing ladies. I shall, of course, see your wife just as often as she will allow me to do so. If you will permit me to say so, my good man, that's entirely her affair. Her marriage to you was a ghastly mistake, as you must know quite as well as she does. Don't make matters worse by attempting to interfere between us. Surely the poor girl has a right to such happiness as she can find in the friendship of a man of her own world. She's been cut off from all things that mean anything to her long enough."

"You are not fit to be a decent woman's friend," said Ace Wilfong, without anger, without venom still. "Women do not understand about men like you. Good women do not. But I have known your kind, here and there. I would rather see a woman I cared about dead than at the mercy of your kind. I have done a few things in my time that do not entitle me to do much preaching. But I have never yet sat in on that kind of a game. And this is once you are not going to deal it out."

Dwight Sutro laughed. "I don't mind telling you," he said, "that I think you're very funny. But you can't keep me away from Jan. If she wants to come to me, with me, she'll come. It is up to her. Why shouldn't she? What can you do about it?"

Ace Wilfong's dark hand shut suddenly, hard. His shadow against the wall, thrown by the candles, bulked huge and black and menacing on the plaster. And that shadow trembled and shook, like a great tree in a strong wind.

"I can do this about it," said the king of the gamblers, very slowly, gently, but any man not drunk with desire, not dazed with brandy, must have heard the death-knell ringing through the words, the warning of men who deal in cold steel and primitive justice: "If you ever go near my wife again, I will kill you as I would a dog."

The black shadow was gone from the wall.

Outside, Ace Wilfong turned his face up to the slow rain that had begun to fall, that it might help to cool those fires he had somehow held in check.

Inside, Dwight Sutro poured himself another glass of brandy and looked with narrowed eyes at the blank wall, where a black shadow had bulked but a few seconds before. Bah! Loud talk, as usual. He'd heard such threats before—or something rather like them, done in a more civilized fashion. Never amounted to anything. His rampant vanity drowned his caution. *He* was too clever, he was too superior, to be bluffed by an—an ex-newsboy.

He helped himself to another glass of brandy.

Afterwards, people remembered that they had seen them together that day upon the tennis-courts of the country club. Naturally they remembered it, for it was considered sufficiently shocking that Dwight Sutro should bring the notorious Mrs. Wilfong within the sacred precincts of that very exclusive place.

Women, seated at the little round tables on the brick terrace dallying with salads and pineapple and dry brown toast, watched the pair with bright, curious eyes, with narrow, hard lips. Afterwards, from the veranda, many people watched Dwight Sutro and Mrs. Wilfong play five, or six, or it may be seven sets of tennis that afternoon.

Mrs. Wilfong wore, they remembered in discussing it afterwards, one of those little tennis frocks made fashionable by the great Lenglen. It left her arms quite bare and they were deliciously brown in the sun. The pleated skirt of it was short, so that every time she raced across the court, or leaped after a ball, it whirled out like a ballet dancer's. And since she wore boy's socks, held up by invisible garters, her brown, bare knees flashed into view.

There was quite a buzz upon the veranda when Mrs. Abbott Sutro and her daughter Metha came along. Metha was in golf things. She settled her mother, billowing, frothing, in a big wicker chair. She dropped on the veranda railing. She nodded to this one and that one before she became conscious of that watchful curiosity about her.

That high, clear, boy voice, sending out a little shout of victory! Metha knew that voice. She looked toward the tennis-court and then she understood. But she gave no sign.

When she had sat quietly thinking long enough for people to stop watching her, Metha said slowly to her mother, "Mama, I am going back to town"

"Back to town?" said Mrs. Sutro, annoyed. "You just got here. Aren't you going to play golf, Metha?"

"No," said Metha, "I'm not. I've just thought of something I've got to attend to. You watch for the Painters and tell them. You can sit here until it's time for tea. I'll either come back or send the car back for you."

Driving into town, Metha Sutro turned over carefully and as coolly as she could that chance information about Dwight's sailing date, his reservations for two, his carefully planned itinerary.

All that might mean nothing. It might mean only that Dwight was hopeful, was prepared to take advantage of those odd, tired moments of weakness that come to every woman.

But it might mean much more. The sight of those two on the tennis-court had crystallized Metha's fear, had brought back the hopelessness of all those tearful, shaken pleas of her mother's, those violent, furious threats of her father's, those cooler, half-humorous warnings of her own. Hopeless? Utterly.

She did not know Ace Wilfong. But he might be able to do something. If she could find him, she would tell him how she had seen Jan and Dwight on the tennis-court together; she would not be dramatic or serious about it, but she would tell him what she knew and suggest that there was gossip and that he might care to—do something. Metha Sutro and Gwennie Wilfong! Bound to go wrong, such women, in touching torrents whose depths, whose swiftness, they could not even dream, bound to unloose appalling floods by their meddling.

Metha worried a little about her mother. Mama was so nervous. She had no restraint.

And she did well to worry.

Sauntering up the steps after the final set, rackets under their arms, all wilted by the sun, came Dwight Sutro and Mrs. Wilfong. The man's face was darkly red, burned redder by the day's sun, and across Jan's forehead was a flurry of sweat.

Mrs. Sutro, from her rocking-chair, saw Dwight first and rose, in a little eddy of pleased surprise, delight. She got to the top of the steps before she recognized Jan, and by that time the tennis players had reached the same destination, so that they stood face to face.

The crowd held its breath.

Mrs. Wilfong gave a careless, an indifferent little nod; very absent-minded and good-natured it was, but still a nod.

And Mrs. Sutro stared straight through her.

Jan's head flung back. A stenographer had cut Stephen Ashe's daughter! Oh, that she



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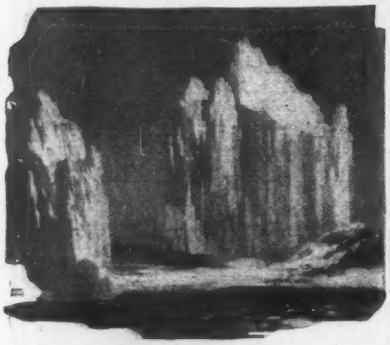
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should dare—*dare*—to do that to Stephen Ashe!

But Mrs. Sutro did an even more appalling thing. She turned one icy shoulder upon Mrs. Wilfong. To her son, in a loud voice, she said, "When you're in fit company to speak to your mother, I'll be glad to see you, Dwight."

"Mother!" The cold, deadly hatred in that voice! Poor Susie Sutro had lost her son now forever.

"Please," said Jan Wilfong. "Please. She is—your mother, you know."

Striding down the steps, across the gravel path, those tiny feet in their strapped and buckled tennis shoes. Striding swiftly as the wind. The face she set against the wind as the big car swung out of the drive was painted white with fury. And the eyes were the eyes of Stephen Ashe bent upon revenge.

No word of hers did the wind have to make sport with, until the car stopped before the door of Dwight Sutro's house.

"I stopped to get your coat," said Dwight Sutro. "Come in and let Williams get you a cup of hot tea. Oh, my poor darling, they seem bent upon tormenting you! If you'd only come away from it all with me. If you'd only leave all this silly, narrow, bigoted claptrap and start out into the big world where you'd be free to be yourself. You're living in the dark ages here. I'll take you to look for your dad, if you want to go. I'll take you into every nook and corner, every palace and dive from London to Shanghai and back again."

The early darkness was falling, but the little hall was soft with candle-light. She seemed so little as she stood there, silent, unreadable.

"Will you stay to dinner?" the man said suddenly.

She wondered a little at the defiance in his voice. "I—don't think so," she said. "Unless—I might telephone. If I'm going to be alone at home, perhaps I will."

Chinamen's voices are so funny over the phone. Now you hear them and now you don't. But Jan was used to them. Pieced together, this puzzle said that Mr. Wilfong had been home and had gone out. Not be back, maybe, till very late.

On the grate a wood fire burned, pungent, very bright. Jan drew near to it with a little shiver. "I'd stay," she said, without much interest, "only I'm so wet and cold. I'd—forgotten. You see, I didn't get my shower."

"Good heavens," said Dwight Sutro, and he touched the back of her white linen dress, "of course, you were soaking. But, my good girl, you can certainly take a shower here as well as any place else. Run up and have your shower, angel, and I'll have Williams get you out a suit of pajamas and a robe. As I remember it, that was always the favorite garb of the Ashes. And we'll hang your clothes right here in front of the fire and by the time you—have to go home, they'll be quite dry. In the meantime, I will entrust Williams to prepare something for your dinner that you are known to be especially fond of, and your likes and dislikes are very well known in this house, I tell you."

"Hurrah," said Jan. But she said it gravely. Plainly she was very tired.

Still, as she went up-stairs she whistled a little, unconcernedly. It did not strike her as a strange thing to do, a dangerous or an unconventional or an immoral thing to do, this taking showers in a man's bathroom and drying her clothes before his fire. As a matter of fact, she thought nothing of it. For that is the way she had been brought up.

Ace Wilfong came swiftly and silently down that dark little side street. On the corner, he stopped and stared at the lighted house with a cold, deliberate, terrible calculation.

Down-stairs the windows were dim and soft, like corners in old churches where shrine candles burn. Up-stairs the house was dark save for one window that shone very brightly against the night. They must be down-stairs. Of course they were down-stairs.

And then suddenly upon that golden shade up-stairs appeared a slim, childlike shadow, swaying upon the blind as a nymph might sway in the moonlight. Every line of that shadow was drawn clear, true, like a Greek boy sculptured in black marble, and Ace Wilfong knew every line of it—ah, how he knew every line of it!

The world fell away from Ace Wilfong's feet.

He thought, "This is death. I am dying." And knew bitterly that he was not.

He plunged across the street, mad, blinded, suffering, a wounded panther stalking its prey to the kill.

But upon the very steps he halted. That iron nerve that had made him king of the gamblers. That coolness trained into him through a life of violence where a man's life depends every day and every night upon his ability to think quickly, clearly in the midst of danger and of passion.

Jan!

He knew. He had seen. He was going to stop the thing. He was going to keep Stephen Ashe's daughter from ruining her life as Steve Ashe had ruined his. He was going to execute judgment, as he counted it every man had a right to execute judgment.

But Jan mustn't be mixed up in it.

Bill Wilfong answered the telephone in Ace's office. "Hello," he said. "Hello, hello. Who is it?" He cursed the telephone.

Then Ace's voice came, clear but strange. A strange voice. "Bill?"

"Yeh. What's up, Ace?"

"Listen, Bill. Don't make any mistake. Do just exactly what I tell you. Call up Jan at Pacific 2279. Tell her to go right home. Tell her to be sure to go alone. Tell her I'm in terrible trouble and to go quick. Get me?"

"Yeh. But are you?"

"No," said Ace Wilfong's voice, held high above the seething torments of his soul by the greatest effort to which he had ever put that superb will of his, "but I'm going to be."

He waited in the shadow, not thinking, forcing himself not to think, sick with the pressure of the iron grip under which he held himself. Amazement crept upon him. This man had disregarded his warning. Hadn't he believed him? What kind of man did he think Ace was?

He must wait. For Jan. And at that thought he was utterly overcome.

A car backed out of the garage beside the house, driven by a man in uniform.

In a few minutes Jan came down the steps. He dared not look. He only sensed a whiteness, a little blur of white that must be her face.

The car hummed away into the night.

Ace Wilfong mounted the steps. When Williams opened the door, he waited now for no formalities. He pushed aside the heavy velvet curtains, he entered that room of firelight and candle-light.

Upon the screen before the fire hung Jan's crumpled little white tennis dress; she had hurried home clad only in pajamas and overcoat.

Dwight Sutro was not a coward; that much can be said for him. But when he looked into Ace Wilfong's face he went green with fear. He made a move toward the drawer of the table.

"Quit that!" said Ace Wilfong. "What would you do with a gun if you had one, you dirty rat? Besides, you have not got the right. Don't grovel. It's too late for that. There is nothing now could keep me from sending you to Hell." His voice was as cold, as steady, as merciless as the sharp edge of an ax. "I gave you your chance. And now I am going to kill you like a dog, as I told you I would, and as God has given every man the right to kill another man who does what you have done to a good woman. If you have a God, get ready to meet him."

Williams, below in the kitchen, pricked up his ears. He thought he had heard a sharp sound, like an engine back-firing, or a tire exploding, or maybe a shot. But then he laughed at himself. Not but what that young man had looked upset enough, and with good reason, as Williams himself well knew. But things like that didn't happen nowadays. Nobody cared

3 8/10 miles—the distance from the heart of Miami to its finest suburban unit, Coral Gables

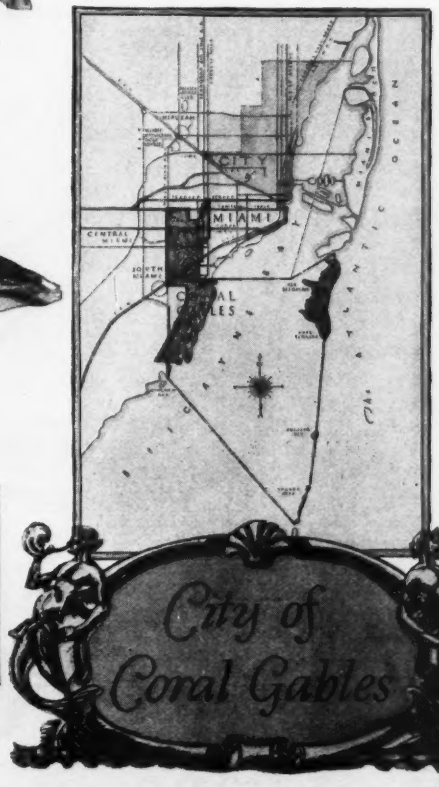


THE future of Coral Gables is indissolubly linked with the future of Miami. Their boundaries coincide for a distance of 13 miles. Every dollar spent in Miami and every addition to its population build Coral Gables' values. Coral Gables does not need to rely only upon its own resources, dependable as they are. For each of these cities shares in the other's prosperity. In fact many of Miami's prominent business men, literally hundreds of them, have chosen Coral Gables as their permanent home. Coral Gables alone offers the high type of suburban life that such people require. It is spacious and healthful, wonderfully beautiful in architecture and landscaping, and all shops and industries are permanently zoned away from the residential sections.

The selection of Coral Gables as the most desirable location in the Miami district has not been confined to home builders. When the site for the great Pan-American University of Miami was considered, Coral Gables was chosen. When the magnificent Miami-Biltmore Hotel was planned, Coral Gables was selected. Miami banks, business houses and social organizations are establishing branches and constructing buildings in Coral Gables. The new Ponce de Leon High School group, drawing pupils from the entire southwest section of Miami, is in Coral Gables.

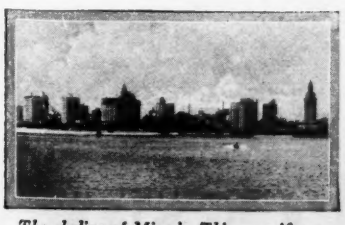
In volume of building construction, Miami was the twelfth city in the United States during the first 6 months of 1926. In the same period, Coral Gables' building volume almost equaled that of Miami. The amazing rise of Miami from a village to a great city in 30 years is one of the most dramatic chapters in business history. As the gateway to Latin-America, as a world port, as the possible metropolis of the South, Miami's future seems as brilliant to the international economist as to the local business man—and where Miami goes, there goes Coral Gables. . . . Will you go with it? Write to Dept. H-2, Chamber of Commerce of the City of Coral Gables, Florida, for facts and full information.

Did you realize that the city of Miami, itself, bounds Coral Gables on two sides for 13 miles? Along the Atlantic, from Key Biscayne to Ragged Keys, Coral Gables' boundaries extend for 15 miles, and in addition there are about 6 miles of bay frontage, and about 25 miles frontage on canals and lagoons now partly completed. Its area is 16 square miles or about 10,000 acres.





This is the residence in Coral Gables of Clifton D. Benson, senior member of one of Miami's foremost law firms—Benson, McGarry and Sullivan. In the four-month period between May 1st and September 1st of this year, 71 homes in Coral Gables were bought by residents of Miami through a single broker.



The skyline of Miami. This magnificent city of 200,000 estimated population has but one suburb adequate to the needs and tastes of its best citizens—Coral Gables. The unequaled living conditions of Coral Gables are proving as irresistible to Miami citizens as to residents of northern cities.



The Coral Gables Rapid Transit Corporation gives frequent trolley service over its 17.2 miles of track in Coral Gables and Miami, running directly into downtown Miami over two separate routes, supplemented by bus services covering all residential areas.

A Unit of Greater Miami, Florida

Taking the hurdles of everyday life—

GRANTED, they may be little tasks: for instance—determining not to roll over for another forty winks when you know you should get up; brushing your teeth; shaving when you have trouble keeping your eyes open; getting under the shower.

All these early morning hurdles when you're still half asleep are not jobs you tackle with eagerness. Still you know they must be done.

But when they are accomplished, how refreshed you feel! And how you rebuke yourself later in the day if you've been lazy and overlooked any one of them.

Particularly tooth brushing: next perhaps, only to the bath; it's not only the most refreshing thing in your morning routine but how important it is to your own well-being!

Still to most of us it seems every day only as another necessary job—one of those little hurdles.

Realizing the truth of this, the makers of Listerine set out deliberately to formulate a dentifrice that would furnish the *easiest, quickest way* to clean teeth.

In short, a tooth paste efficient even in the hands of lazy people—for in tooth brushing, at least, the word *lazy* applies to so many of us.

Listerine Tooth Paste is really very *easy to use.* It works fast. With just a minimum of brushing your teeth feel clean—and actually *are* clean.

You have the job done almost before you know it.

This is on account of the way Listerine Tooth Paste is made. It contains a specially prepared cleansing ingredient—entirely harmless to enamel*—plus the antiseptic essential oils that have made Listerine famous.

And how fine your mouth feels after this kind of a brushing! Then, besides, you *know* your teeth are really clean—and therefore safe from decay —*Lambert Pharmacal Co., St. Louis, U. S. A.*



P. S.—By the way, Listerine Tooth Paste is only 25 cents for the large tube.

**This specially prepared cleansing medium (according to tests based upon the scale of hardness scientists employ in studying mineral substances) is much softer than tooth enamel. Therefore, it cannot scratch or injure the enamel.*

At the same time it is harder than the tartar *which accumulates and starts tooth decay.*

LISTERINE

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"—even for lazy people"

TOOTH · PASTE

-- easy to use

enough about such things, what with the way women were carrying on and all.

Gwennie Wilfong opened the door of her sister-in-law's bedroom.

Jan stood quite motionless in the middle of the floor. Her eyes flew to Gwennie's pinched, strange face.

"I have to tell you," said Gwennie's unbelieving voice, "that Ace has killed Dwight Sutro."

In the car, Gwennie did not dare to look at her sister-in-law. And yet she was eternally conscious of that gray, frightened, *knowing* face.

Gwennie had never thought what it would be like to see Jan frightened. Frightened, but never funking anything. Not frightened of any deep waters ahead for her, but staggered by the irrevocable, unchangeable past. And Gwennie did not like it. It was the arrogant, gay, enticing Jan Ashe over whom she wished to triumph, not this creature of the enormous, unwavering gray eyes.

But that was not the worst of it. The worst was Jan's awareness of this thing. Gwennie's own thoughts still scurried hither and thither, still refused stark facts. Not Jan. She looked the thing squarely in the face from the first second. She was like a fighter who knows he is beaten and stands up gamely to take his beating. She *saw*—to the last detail.

Gwennie tried to picture something that was a murder. But her imagination always cut off, like a motion-picture, before the bullet.

But Jan Wilfong, wrapped in darkness, shuddering in darkness, *knew*. That fire-lit, candle-lit room. The two men. Their faces. The brooding, fateful mass of passions in Ace's, welded and set like that of some pagan god of vengeance. The sneer, the fear on Dwight's. No delay. No quarter. Lightning striking. That slight figure fallen sideways, limp, helpless at last, with a look of intense surprise on its face. It was as though Dwight had cried out, "You *can't* do this to me!" and death had sardonically frozen that useless conceit into his final earthly mask.

Her white dress, drying by the fire. Steady, steady. Madness lay that way.

Suddenly Gwennie whimpered. The dumbness was wearing away and pain was creeping through. Triumph? What price triumph?

Jan seemed to become aware of her presence for the first time. "Don't cry, Gwennie," she said. "Everything will be all right."

"All right? You can say that! What will they do to Ace?"

"They won't do anything to Ace."

"They'll hang him," shrieked Gwennie, "and I—you did it—I——"

Jan laughed. "Don't be silly," she said. "The jury won't be out five minutes. I don't suppose a man ever had a stronger unwritten law defense since the world began."

"The unwritten law?" Gwennie's hysterics subsided under the ice of that dreary voice.

"The unwritten law," explained the merciless voice, "is one that has no legal place on our statute books, but it is founded even more solidly upon public opinion and public sentiment. It gives a man the right to kill in defense of his home or in revenge for his lost honor. The man who kills a seducer or an—adulterer has about as much chance to hang in California as he has in Kentucky."

A gasp of relief choked Gwennie.

"So you see," said Stephen Ashe's daughter, "Ace is as good as free already."

"I thank God for that!" said Gwennie.

Which all goes to prove how little these two women who should have known Ace Wilfong so well actually knew him.

The car swung round the little park and drew up before the police-station jail, a towering menace in the darkness. Going up in the elevator, a wave of pure terror engulfed Gwennie, but she pulled herself together and managed to walk down the narrow corridor.

The man with the big keys, sitting between the two barred gates, did not know Jan. He sat staring rudely at her.

"I am Mrs. Wilfong," said Jan quietly.

He unlocked the gate and they came in. He locked it behind them. They passed through the second barrier and it clanged behind them, and the enormous key grated in the lock.

The jailer came out to meet them. An old man, in brown trousers and a light gray coat and a large black fedora hat. No one had ever seen old man Mullaly without this hat on.

"Why, hello, Miss Ashe," he said. Why, he had known Jan Ashe—Steve Ashe's little girl—why, many a time she'd sat on his desk and played with the handcuffs or his big gold watch while her father was talking to some prisoner in the cage—Steve Ashe, gone now, and there was nobody like him who came around the jail these days. He took Jan's hand in both his rough old ones and pressed it hard.

Gwennie saw Jan's eyes close. "Hello, Mr. Mullaly," was all she said.

"This is sorta mean luck," said the old man.

"Yes," said Jan, and turned away.

Only two small lights burned in the barred room—officially they name it the reception-room, but familiarly it is known as the cage.

At a cheap oak table sat Ace Wilfong. He looked tired, but otherwise not different than Ace Wilfong, the king of the gamblers, had always looked. Four or five other men sat there, and half a dozen more leaned against the partition of bars, or the heavy black screen from behind which certain prisoners must hold even the lightest conversation. The reporters were there, and the captain of detectives, and two of his men, assistant jailers, a man from the district attorney's office, Bill Wilfong and Jerry Kress. They were breaking the routine a little; they were going out of their way to make things informal for their friend Ace Wilfong.

This, then, was the way Jan and Ace had to meet, with all that they had between them.

Jan walked steadily, and Gwennie somehow thought of Marie Antoinette in her prison cell, more queen when she had helped to kick her own throne to pieces than she had ever been while she sat upon it.

Ace did not see her until she was close to the table. But when he did, he stood up and there broke from him one sound, like the bellow of a wounded tiger.

The men turned their eyes away as best they could, even the reporters. They gave the moment that poor privacy.

Jan Wilfong put her hands upon her husband's breast. They clutched his coat with a strength of which you would never have suspected those small white hands. It seemed actually as though she were holding herself upright only by their desperate clinging.

And her eyes as they looked into his, her eyes were in Hell. There is no other word for it. For if self-loathing and remorse and crucified love and pride are not Hell, what is Hell? But the scarlet satin mouth which she had painted over her ashen lips smiled bravely at him.

She said, "This is tough luck, Ace. But we'll stand by, you know. We'll all do everything we can. You can—count on me, dear."

And he knew, and the reporters knew, that she meant to tell him she would hang her lost honor in the public square to justify this deed he had done.

He put his arms around her tight. And so they stood for a long moment, silent, seeking what comfort they might find.

A reporter, however, is only a reporter. Editions must go to press.

Ace had sat tight under the hideously glaring lights in the big detectives' room, while the best of the dicks battered him with questions to amplify his bare statement, when he had walked in and given himself up, that he had killed young Sutro. Now, after this psychological move to the bars themselves, the reporters took up the task, firing from different angles. They should have known Ace's nerves were proof against every suggestion. He continued to sit tight and say nothing. He was very good at it.

"There is nothing to be said about this thing yet," he told them. "I have given myself up. I did it. That should be story enough. Your time will come at the trial. But now I have not got anything to talk to you about."

From that stand they could not move him.

Nor did they have any better luck that night with Mrs. Wilfong.

"My dad," said Mrs. Wilfong, when they laid down their barrage of questions, "my dad always said to talk a lot to reporters, but be sure never to say anything. I am not up to that yet. I like to play ball with the reporters. I—I will pose for your camera men tomorrow. I suppose you will want that. But I haven't had a chance to talk to Ace alone yet. Be reasonable." And she managed the tiniest shadow of a grin.

Oh, they were all very casual, they all acted as natural as they possibly could. Everybody did meaningless things, there were long, odd pauses, people made perfunctory remarks. And you would probably have picked out little Mikkleson, who was a good reporter but always got jumpy and sweaty when he worked, as the murderer.

"He has got to see his lawyers first," said Bill Wilfong. "You can't expect a man to do anything until he has consulted his lawyers. We'll attend to that first thing in the morning."

He consulted Gwennie with his eyes. They had never been very close, this brother and sister, but it was strange how they seemed now to be standing shoulder to shoulder. And then Ace noticed Gwennie for the first time.

"Hello, Gwen," he said.

She got up and came around and kissed him. And Jan Wilfong followed her with unreadable gray eyes, with almost jealous attention.

"Who are you going to get?" asked old man Carey.

Bill Wilfong said something, but it was drowned by the gentle voice of Ace.

"I have not made up my mind about that, Carey," he said. "It is a hard thing to decide about lawyers. The boys"—he glanced at his brother and Jerry—"the boys have tried to give me the rush act about it, but it will have to wait until I have thought a little."

An abrupt scramble startled them, a loud voice raised in fluent and unexpected oaths. It was only little Mikkleson, trying frantically to find his hat.

"I just remembered," he babbled, "that this guy that got popped off was the boss's son. Holy codfish, what a boob I am!"

He vanished into the night toward his office, hatless, sweating, uttering loud cries of self-condemnation, and across the ghost he had raised the eyes of Jan and Ace Wilfong met for a startled instant.

That started the exodus.

It was late and the reporters had their stories to write, and it was a great story. In every newspaper office in San Francisco, and in many other places, editors were tearing down their front pages to remake for the Wilfong-Sutro murder. City editors were sending copy boys to the morgue to dig up all the art on the Wilfongs, on Stephen Ashe—great heaven, Steve Ashe's daughter, the granddaughter of old Senator Ashe and of Deborah Ashe, who had been a Beecher of Boston. Ace Wilfong, the king of the gamblers. And the young and handsome heir to all the millions and the power and the social prestige of the Sutros. What a yarn! This was a murder with *class*.

When the copy boys of the Standard, the strongest opposition paper to the Sutros, came tearing back, the managing editor and the head of the copy desk, and the sob sister who had gone home and been sent for in haste, and the art editor, all gathered around the city editor's desk and looked at the pictures.

"I don't think she's so pretty," said the sob sister, looking down at a copy of Hermann Verbeck's portrait of Jan Ashe.

"Well, she can have *me*," said the sporting editor.

"I guess that's what young Sutro thought," said the city editor, "and it seems to have been an expensive idea."

"I suppose she'll go on the stand in his defense," said the city editor. "That ought to get him off without any trouble. And what a story it will make!"

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But the managing editor laid his opinion heavily upon the conversation. "Have you all forgotten that this man shot Abbott Sutro's only son? Since when has it been easy to do anything to old Sutro and get away with it? The whole ramification of the Sutro family and business will be out after him."

"What a hue and cry there is going to be from all the folks that were trying to run Ace Wilfong out of town not long ago—all the church folks and the women's clubs and everybody," said the sporting editor.

"You're probably right, at that," said the city editor. "But I still think no jury will ever convict him, not if she kicks through."

None of this aroused the city. The city slept on. Why, that grubby telegraph operator might look up from his doze any minute to shout that the Pope has died or the President been assassinated or the Prince of Wales married an American, and the office would dash into maddest action, but still the city would sleep on, waiting for the sensation these men prepared for them. That is why there is no other game like the newspaper game and why men never really break away from it.

But some places in the city did not sleep. For instance, every window of the great stone mansion of the Sutros' blazed with light. Behind them, a thin, brittle old man raved orders into a telephone, planning battle and revenge like some ancient deity. A fat old woman knelt and begged, first her God to give her back her boy, and then her pale, sleep-walking daughter to let her go and see her boy. "Not yet, Mama, not yet." Let them hide that wound, let them wipe away that pale and terrible violence.

In Ace Wilfong's office, Booze Jacobs, Jock McMonagle, Red Sullivan and the rest of the boys talked in their unaccented parlance and answered the ceaselessly ringing telephone. News travels through strange channels in the underworld.

And a man and a woman sat alone now in that ill-lighted room. Alone in a room made of bars on three sides. They could whisper without being overheard, and that was all the privacy they might have, now and for weeks to come, perhaps forever. Even a Jan Ashe might not be permitted to go into those cells up-stairs where soon Ace Wilfong would take up his abode.

They looked at each other, those two over whose heads so many things had passed since last they looked into each other's eyes. And the gray eyes were wet, and it came to Ace that he had not seen them wet since they first gave him courage to tell her that he loved her.

"Listen, my darling." The voice was lower than a whisper, but it was not a whisper, it was too brave for a whisper. "Let us not try to talk of what is gone. Only—I love you. I love you. I have never loved anyone but you. And I will do anything, I must do something, to—oh my poor darling! What have I done to you?"

She put her hands over her face, and he knew she was near to breaking then.

"Jan"—sternly—"Jan, don't! I can't stand it. You're right. We won't talk about the past. Tell me you love me, Jan. Tell me. Say it. Oh, honey, make me believe it!"

The hands dropped and she turned her eyes up to him. "How can life do such a thing to people?" she said slowly. "I have never loved anyone but you."

For a long time they sat silent, hands numb in each other's tight clasp.

"You know I will do anything for you," said Jan again, and she bent and kissed his hands, over and over.

"Then you will keep quiet," said Ace Wilfong. "You will not say anything to anybody. Understand that?"

She nodded. "Ace—can you—do you think you'll ever forgive me, ever love me again?"

"There is no talk of forgiving between you and me," said the gambler, "and I didn't love you just for better. I loved you when I thought you were a saint in Heaven, and I would love you just the same in Hell. But I will not let you go there. And I cannot speak my love like I want to. I have not got the words. But I could not stop loving you any more than a mother can stop loving her baby. And I would protect you if I could, Jan, like a mother would protect her baby."

That much, that much only, he allowed himself to say. And it was very little, considering the task of silence ahead of him, the task to which he had set himself and meant to set her.

Old man Mullaly, hearing no more words from them, came in. They turned and faced him gravely, and he thought he had never seen two faces so ashy white, burned white.

"Scotty's out here," he said, "and your sister says Miss Ashe maybe had better come home and try to get some sleep."

"I—won't go," said Jan quickly. Then, almost in wonder, "You must stay here, Ace. Here! Mr. Mullaly, where will he—sleep? Oh——" The cry was like a moan.

"Don't you fret, Miss Ashe," said the old jailer. "I expect we can fix him up fairly comfortable."

But the gray eyes would not be comforted. She might not take him home with her to comfort him, to hold him in her arms, his head pillowed upon her breast, pouring out her love, abasing herself and her pride, yearning, striving to express the great love and dawning penitence of her heart.

For where had *her* freedom led *him?* She must leave him—here.

And, somehow, she did.

To Scotty, Ace said, "Thank you for coming so quick. I had not meant for Bill to get you out of bed tonight."

"I was glad to come," said Scotty. "What can I do?"

"I thought this might change things," said Ace. "Even if he would not tell before, he might see it different now. There is a—need."

Scott nodded. "I will try again," he said.

The sleepless night marched to a fog-choked dawn. And in its half-light, Stephen Ashe's daughter and the king of the gamblers faced the army of thoughts that had marshaled against them in the darkness like a firing-squad.

Ace, still sitting by the oak table, since he had chosen to spend the night there, strengthened his resolve. But to Jan the disconsolate dawn brought so sharp a longing to have her father beside her in this hour that she could scarcely keep from crying it aloud.

The rallying of the clan to Ace Wilfong was a quick, vivid but silent business. In fewer days than it took the grand jury to indict him, the underworld high and low stood in solid and impassive ranks behind Ace Wilfong, ready to battle to the death for him.

They still maintained the code of indifference proper to such surroundings and occasions, but strange things began to happen. Pressure was brought to bear in very high places. Men of position, men who amounted to something, found themselves confronted in this crisis by specters from their dead pasts, and these specters suggested coldly that they use their influence where they could for Ace Wilfong. Favors which were owed, had been owed and allowed to lie idle and collect interest, were suddenly called for collection.

Nor, it must be admitted, were threats absent, threats made in no mean fashion and very much to the point.

Under the strain a judge or two cracked and Sacramento itself was drawn into the fray and sent word down the line, first on one side and then on the other. Ace Wilfong in San Francisco and his cohorts in Los Angeles had elected legislators in their time, as well as city officials, and oddly enough, most of these men stood pat now and could be counted upon.

So that the Juggernaut prepared by the Sutro papers and the reformers and the intensely powerful women's clubs met a cold and menacing and lawless opposition which said briefly, "We intend to see that our man gets fair play if nothing else."

If there were the Sutro papers, there were also opposition papers which had always detested the abrupt superiority and icy sarcasm and social dominance of Abbott Sutro. And it soon became plain that Ace would fight this thing out in open court without fear or favor and win or lose there on the merits of his case.

It was surprising how the name of Stephen Ashe counted. There are no days so long as the days that follow a murder. But in those days Jan Wilfong saw many strange, many wonderful, many sad things come to pass.

To the house on Pacific Avenue came many visitors. Some who came offering help, sympathy, Jan was surprised to see. They made her frozen heart warm in little glowing spots. It was good to see here a man whom long ago Stephen Ashe had saved from disgrace, coming now to make what payment he could to Stephen Ashe's daughter. Or to find on the door-step someone to whom he had done a kindness and who had not forgotten it.

But in the ranks of those who came to Jan Ashe in the hour of her trouble were heart-rending gaps that testified to an ingratitude on the part of those whose very lives he had saved that filled her with rage and bitterness.

Dorothea Joliffe came. Her mouth was an iron slit, but from it came no words of recrimination. The family pride, the pride of race, which had been her guiding star, had fallen. What she endured, Jan began to guess faintly, but she said nothing except: "We'll do what we can. Let people know I'm standing by you. It might help a little. We don't blame your poor husband. Where is your father?"

Jan shook her head. "I don't know," she said.

In Bill Wilfong's flat on California Street—the big place was closed and dismantled now—Ace's own gang began plans for his defense. They gathered, Bill and Jerry Kress and the others, and talked. But they were worried. They were more worried than they would let anybody know.

Ace was worrying them.

The Sutro papers had made plain enough from the start their intention. They would spare Mrs. Wilfong no belittling indignity. But they were out to hang Ace Wilfong. That would be their prime revenge upon his wife. In order to do that, they were willing enough to spare her the final insult. Ace Wilfong, they indicated, had brooded over causeless suspicion. Being what he was, he had not understood the ways and manners of his betters. He had not understood the friendship of his wife and that young man of sterling quality and budding promise, Dwight Sutro. These two had been friends from childhood. No wrong had been done Ace Wilfong. Dwelling upon fancied wrongs, this outlaw, this gunman and gambler, had finally brought himself to deliberate murder.

A man, said the district attorney, a man who intends to claim the unwritten law in his defense, must shoot under blinding provocation; he must prove menace, dishonor, and a cause for his motive beyond all question. This he conceived to be a cold-blooded and deliberate killing by a man who had long defied the law and who would not hesitate to use violent measures to satisfy a causeless jealousy.

The district attorney naturally knew nothing of that shadow on the blind and of those two steamer tickets. But he suspected something of the kind, and he waited for Ace to speak, for Jan to speak. And Ace's gang waited.

But Ace sat tight and refused a word.

"I know what he's driving at," said Booze Jacobs one afternoon, "and so do you if you've got any sense."

Bill Wilfong looked at him silently.

"Yeh?"

"Well, what's it all about, then?" said Red Sullivan. "There he sits and laughs at us, or just gets white and clams up. I says to him this morning, I says, 'Ace, kidding aside, it's time you picked out a lawyer,' and he says, 'Well, Red, I'm sort of waiting to hear from a guy I used to know.'"





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"I shouldn't be surprised," said Booze, "if he didn't get any lawyer. Thing is—he's not going to try to get off." They stared at him, waiting an explanation of this amazing idea. "Because why? Because to do it he's got to blacken his wife. He'll hang before he lets her say he killed her lover."

Bill Wilfong swore softly and deeply. "The poor, blazing fool," he said. "No woman is worth that. He only did what any guy would have done. Let her stand up and take her licking like a man."

"She would," said Booze, over his whisky, "she would. She's all right."

Bill Wilfong went to the telephone and called Gwennie. It was characteristic that they would sit silent, motionless, until she arrived.

"That's it," she said bleakly, when Bill had explained to her this fantastic idea of wild chivalry upon which Ace was perhaps bent. "I been figuring that out the same way lately."

"But—she mustn't let him! Would she let him hang?—she wouldn't let him *hang!*" said Red wildly. "Can't she say something anyway?"

"We'll make her when the time comes," said Gwennie, and then she added: "Oh, she's willing enough! She don't talk to me. Don't talk to anybody. Just sits at the window all the time like she was watching for somebody. But I know he made her promise to keep quiet until he told her to talk. Said it was all she could do for him. So she's doing it."

"I'm going down now and see Ace," said Bill Wilfong.

It was almost dark when he got back.

"He says," said Bill to the silent, motionless circle, "he says he won't plead the unwritten law if he hangs twenty times. 'A man can't die but once, Bill,' he says to me, grinning, 'and though I'm not anxious to hang, there are worse things. You boys sit tight, will you?' "

There was a long silence.

"Well, will we?" said Booze Jacobs.

"I don't know yet," said Jerry Kress, who in Ace's absence was the head of the gang.

From the windows of Ace's room, where she had taken to sitting a good deal these days, Jan had watched Gwennie go. She did not know where Gwennie was going, but she did not particularly care. She liked being alone. There were many things of which she must think, whether she liked them or not, work out unhampered by confusion and contact. Jan was amazed in those days to find how contact with people had influenced her life, she who had always thought herself so free of them.

Mostly, she thought of Ace and of his love for her. She was learning to carry that thought like a cross. His voice was in her ears. Only since she had heard that gentle, expressionless drawl of his day after day in the jail, had she come to realize the quality of the love-voice he kept for her.

Wong came in, slipped in on noiseless feet like a shadow, and put down a little tray on the small table beside her. He poured a cup of the fragrant, steaming tea and went out.

Jan did not drink the tea but lighted a cigaret as company for her sadness. She must be sad now. For at the jail she was never sad any more. But in Ace's room, Mrs. Wilfong could be sad, bearing her thoughts and her prayer company.

The dusk came gently. There was no fog. Footfalls came, and ceased. Men coming home. But her man would not come, tonight or for many nights. And that was because she had not valued his coming, no doubt. One very little star fought with the warm evening sky. Shadows deepened.

Jan became conscious then of a figure, a man's figure, walking up the sidewalk. She was conscious of it, but she did not let herself look. Hope was so precious—any hope, even a little silly illusion. She looked, and shut her eyes in anguish. Her pulses were hammering and her throat was dry. She could not swallow.

She heard voices at the door; the door opened, shut, and she sat still with the sweat coming out all over her.

Slowly, her knees knocking against each other, she got up and went down-stairs. She kept her eyes shut. When her foot struck the big rug at the bottom, she opened them wide and stared.

Stephen Ashe stood there. So white, so thin, so shabby and old and gray, but Stephen Ashe for all that.

"Daddy!" said Jan.

He could not speak. He held out his arms.

"Daddy," said Jan. "Daddy, Daddy——"

And then they were sobbing in each other's arms.

"Let me look at you," he said. "My little girl. Let me *look* at you." He could not keep his voice steady, but he smiled at her through his tears. "Why, honey," he said, "why, how lovely you are! You look well. You're—you're all right, honey?"

She nodded. She touched his hair—ah, the black had surrendered entirely now; that shining black hair was almost white, and that was what made him look so different. She touched his frayed suit that he tried to wear as though it were not shiny and ragged about the cuffs, she shut her eyes against his cracked shoes.

"Daddy," she said, "I can't believe it. I've prayed—I can't. It's you—it's you. Really you."

"What's left of me," said Stephen Ashe.

"But my Lord, Ace, you can't do it!" said Bill Wilfong, and if his voice was low it was still like a scream. "You can't. Ace, listen to us."

They were around that heavy oak table in the reception-room of the county jail. Every face was white.

"You're crazy," Bill Wilfong pleaded. And he turned to Jerry Kress with a gesture and begged for his help.

"Listen here a minute, Ace," said Jerry Kress. "I know you got sentiment about this thing. And sentiment's all right in its place. But you got to have a good lawyer, that's all. I tell you there's just one lawyer for you to get and I been telling you that right from the start, and that's Laurence Coffin, from Chicago. Hasn't he got more men off lately than anybody? He's the best lawyer in the country."

"His name don't sound especially lucky to me," said Ace Wilfong. "I am not a superstitious man, but I ain't hankering after a man named Coffin to defend me."

"We can get that Judge Bolling, from New York, then," said Jock McMonagle. "He's the biggest lawyer in this country today, bar nobody. We should get the biggest lawyer there is. They are going to make it just as tough for you as they can, Ace."

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Ace Wilfong grimly. He tried to cover the grimness with that grin of his. "But I will have to take my chances."

"Are you sticking to that about not using the unwritten law defense?" Red Sullivan asked the question they had all been waiting to ask.

"I haven't got any unwritten law defense," said Ace coldly.

"Then you better get you a good lawyer," said Red Sullivan.

"I have got me a good lawyer," said Ace.

"Listen, Ace," said Scotty slowly, and he had not spoken all the time the buffeting back and forth had gone on, "you know I'm with you in this thing. You know I knew Steve Ashe when—when he *was* a good lawyer. More than that, I knew him when they couldn't beat him. But, Ace, this isn't the same Steve Ashe. Why, man, he's nothing but a shell."

Ace did not answer. His lips were white, but they were set.

"If he was the Steve Ashe he used to be," Scotty went on, choosing his words carefully, for he had at least guessed a little of what was in Ace's mind, "why, there wouldn't be any argument about it. But is he?"

"No, I don't reckon he is, Scotty."

"I was a great admirer of his in the old days," said Scotty. "But I—I have talked with him since he got back. He was pretty bad when he went away, Ace. But those months in that heat, and drinking a quart of whisky a day and not eating have about finished him. Are you taking that into consideration? I believe in—in doing right, too, Ace, but a man's life is something to him and he has a right to fight for it."

"I am not anxious to die," said Ace Wilfong. "And I would feel worse to be—shut up for the rest of my life. You boys must remember I have spent quite a while in this jail already. I know what it is like. You didn't used to think me such a fool. Can't you figure out some way that I have got a mighty good reason in this thing?"

Booze Jacobs wiped his forehead with a large silk handkerchief. "A man sometimes gets his reasons twisted out of all proportion," he said. "Self-sacrifice is a mighty fine thing, and I have always admired it in books, but there ought to be a limit to it in real life."

They had all gone beyond anything that had ever passed between them, in emotion, in the revelation of their secret thoughts and feelings.

The silence grew.

Suddenly Bill Wilfong swung around and his face was tense. In that moment he hated Jan Wilfong.

"You've got to get a decent lawyer," he shouted. "You've got to. If you won't send for Bolling or Coffin, get somebody here to associate with Ashe. At least do that."

Ace looked at him quietly. His eyebrows met in a black scowl, but in his eyes were both sympathy and understanding for this younger brother who loved him.

"I have got a hunch about this thing, Bill," he said gently, winningly. "You know, long before I knew him at all, I used to see Steve Ashe, and I—maybe you remember that he was sort of an idol of mine. There never was another lawyer like him. I have not forgotten how he—he used to buy my whole basket of violets from me, and give me a gold piece. That was the beginning of my luck, Bill. And if this is the end of my luck, I would like to play it out that way."

He put it like that. Well a gambler knows the art of gentlemanly subterfuge. As for that shadow on the blind, he would never tell anybody about that, not even Stephen Ashe.

But Bill's face was black with fury and despair. Poor Bill. He adored Ace.

"All right," he said ominously, furiously, "but you can't get away with it. I'll send for Bolling. I'll send for Coffin—both of 'em. And they can dig up the evidence and give you a decent defense whether you like it or not."

"If you do that," said Ace Wilfong, in his gentlest voice, "I will go into the court-room when my case is called and plead guilty."

That stopped them. They sat looking at their finger-nails, not moving, expressionless.

"I like to think it was my luck brought Stephen Ashe back here just at this time," said Ace gently. "I didn't expect he'd come back. Let us say it is my luck." The old ring of command was in his voice now.

He put it that way.

And maybe at that, for he was superstitious, he did believe in his luck. But he knew and they knew that he had refused the greatest legal talent of the day and chosen Stephen Ashe because only in his hands would Jan's honor be safe.

Put Jan on the witness-stand before a packed and gaping court-room, at the mercy of that cold-blooded district attorney, to brand herself with her own words? Never. And yet who could be trusted to keep her off except Stephen Ashe? What other lawyer, pressed by defeat, might not break faith and suddenly call out those two words, "Mrs. Wilfong"?

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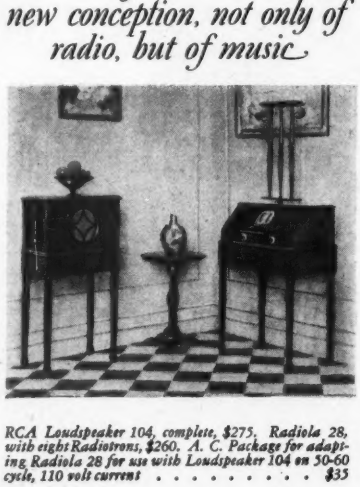
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Across the Rio Grande *by Frederick R. Bechdolt* (*Continued from page 93*)

little interval he went on again. "Fact is, I'm sendin' him down below Fronteras after them hosses I bought fer the San Pedro ranch, tomorrow mo'nin'."

"So Molly told me this afternoon." She saw that had surprised him and she renewed her attack on his taciturnity. "Haven't you noticed her, Bill? It's been getting worse ever since that night when Cheyenne drove us in from Silver Creek. They've been together every evening for two months."

"I aim to put him in charge of the San Pedro ranch, ef he makes good on this hoss job," he told her. "That's prospects enough fer a man to marry on."

"But that's not the idea." She withdrew her hand from his and laid it on his arm. "Bill, you know how many renegades have drifted into this country. And Cheyenne never says a word about his past. It's common talk among the cowboys that if you speak of Texas to him, he'll change the subject. I don't like the looks of that."

"Man's got a right to keep his mouth shet," he answered doggedly. "Cheyenne's clean strain. I wouldn't trust him with ten thousand dollars' worth of hosses ef I wasn't sure of him."

While this conversation was going on at the ranch-house Cheyenne and Molly were talking of the errand which was to take him down into Mexico. And if Mrs. Savage could have seen them then, she would have realized that things had been progressing considerably further than outsiders dreamed.

The two half-broken colts were tugging on their bits; now one of them would rear, lifting its front feet from the earth; now both would surge forward, trying to break into a run. Occasionally he gave them head for a few steps, then brought them down to a dancing walk, holding the reins between the strong fingers of one hand. The other arm was around Molly's waist and her head was nestling against his shoulder. The shadows were creeping down from the western mountains. Cheyenne's voice was very soft now.

"When Bill told me this afternoon that it was me he aimed to send down there, he as much as said he would put me in charge of the San Pedro ranch after I got back." He broke off for a moment and there was pride in Molly's eyes as she watched him soothing the restless colts. "You understand how much that job would mean, dear? It would put me in shape where I would have a right to marry you."

"I understand," she answered softly; "I was hoping he would pick you."

"Then it will be all right—when I come back?" He looked down into her face and, seeing his answer in her eyes, he bent his head to kiss her. The colts surged forward and the sharp fragments of malpais clinked to their dancing hoofs. When he had restrained them, he spoke again. "Sometimes I wonder at this luck that has come to me now. It seems like more than any man deserves. And me. I have rode wild and had my fling, as the sayin' is. Yet there was nothin', after all, that I'm ashamed of."

Ahead of them the ranch-house showed, a smudged outline upon the summit of the mesa.

"In the morning you'll ride out," she whispered, "and I'll be watching you when you go. But we must say our good-by now, dear."

"Yes, now." He nodded. "A while back it crossed my mind to ask you if I couldn't tell Bill and your sister about this tonight. And then it came to me how it would be best to wait until he decides for sure to send me over to the San Pedro ranch. You see, I'd rather he would give me the job just on the strength of what I've done, without knowin' I was to be his brother-in-law."

So, while the colts chafed under the restraining reins, they said their good-by after the manner of lovers the world over, and in the morning when he rode away alone into the south upon his errand, he looked back at the long adobe ranch-house and waved his hand. And Molly watched him from the wide veranda, riding on and on until he and his horse became a speck in the distance. Then the speck vanished and there remained only the mysterious reaches where the long plain and the remote mountains and the cloudless sky seemed to merge behind a haze of rising heat-waves.

Now, every morning when she rose, Molly would go out on the long veranda and her eyes would seek that spot down in old Mexico where the earth and mountains and the sky seemed to meet. And during the days she found herself spending most of her leisure hours sitting in one of the rustic chairs watching this place where her lover had vanished from her sight, where she would first discover him on his homecoming. A strange shy pride was in her heart, a pride that made her head go back and brought a light into her eyes when she thought of him, which strove to conceal itself from all others.

One afternoon when Cheyenne had been gone more than a week, young Mrs. Savage found her sister sitting here.

"I was looking for you all over the house," she said. "Bill promised to ride over to Skeleton Canyon with me and now he's got some cattle to look after. Won't you go instead, dear?"

Molly, who would have liked nothing better than to remain there in that chair day-dreaming until dinner-time, declared she would be very glad to go. And so it happened that the two of them in their long-skirted riding-habits were passing the bunk-house on their way to the corral just in time to be eavesdroppers on an argument which was not intended for their ears. It was the voice of one of the cowboys that halted them.

"All that I'm tellin' you is what they're sayin' in Tombstone about Cheyenne."

"Well, who's a-sayin' it an' what do they say?" The second voice was argumentative

"Bush Reddy was the one told me. He done said that Cheyenne used to be a hoss thief back in Texas. Seems like a bartender in the Crystal Palace knew him in San Antone. He claims they was five or six in the gang and they did a big business. Then things got too hot fer 'em; they busted up, an' Cheyenne, he went West."

"Bush Reddy," the second voice stated with profane interpolation, "is a liar. So is the bartender an' so is anybody else that tells that story."

"Mebbe he is," the first voice asserted hotly, "but fer all anybody knows, Cheyenne might of stole hosses."

"Yes, an' fer all anybody knows," the second voice answered witheringly, "you might be one of the James brothers. Only you ain't man enough to rob a train."

"That'll do now," the foreman's voice cut in. "This here is Cheyenne's business and he'll tend to it when he gets back."

Mrs. Savage felt Molly's hand upon her arm. The girl's lips were white, but her voice was without a quiver.

"I don't think I'll go riding, dear," she said, and they returned to the house in silence.

When his wife told him of the cowboys' talk that evening, Bill Savage's eyes narrowed.

"I wouldn't like to be Bush Reddy when Cheyenne gets back," he commented.

"But supposing, Bill, he doesn't come back?" Her eyes were wide with the dread she had been feeling all the afternoon. "Supposing that was the truth? And now he's down there in Mexico with ten thousand dollars' worth of horses and only vaqueros in his outfit."

"Listen, Sweet," he told her quietly, "those are my hosses and I ain't a-worryin'."

Thereafter, every day when Molly went out on the veranda to look into the south toward the spot where the plain and the mountains and the cloudless sky seemed to meet behind a haze of heat-waves, she would lift her head proudly, and a light would come into her eyes. For she had felt the presence of the doubt which her sister held; and the knowledge made her own faith in her absent lover deeper than before.

Always, when she was here, she used to count the days which must still pass before he would come home. Ten days; then nine; then eight; and then a week. Always she watched the spot down there in the mysterious distance and thought of the time when the faint pillar of dust would appear there, rising toward the cloudless sky—the signal of the coming herd.

The week dragged to an end, and her face was weary with the waiting. Then there came a day when she sat on the veranda through the long hours from dawn until sunset. But the sky down in the south remained untarnished in its brightness. And on the day after there was no sign. Nor on the next.

The sun was climbing over the Sierra Madre, warming the long flat, casting brittle shadows beside every little stone and brush clump. Out here where the land began to climb up toward the mountains someone in years gone by had built a hut. Cheyenne was sitting by the aperture, where once a door had hung, and his saddle-horse was standing near by.

Two hundred yards or so away, four swarthy vaqueros were riding up the talus-strewn slope which narrowed as it rose between low hills, picturesque figures in their enormous sombreros and flaring trousers. Beyond the spot where the round hills drew together, meeting the steeper slopes of the Sierra, a sort of amphitheater opened among the cliffs. A band of two hundred sleek-coated horses were cropping the bunches of tawny grass which carpeted its floor. From where Cheyenne was sitting he could see many of them through the contracted gateway which had been riven in the rocks.

Now, as he waited for the dark-skinned riders to bring them out from the natural corral for the day's long drive, his mind went to the future and the hopes it held. Today and one day more and he would have them safe at the home ranch; the responsibility would be over and his work well done; other work and greater responsibilities would be awaiting him. He thought of Molly and the news the two of them had planned to tell when the new job was given him. And then, by some quirk of fancy, the memory of old days came to him and he mused aloud, after the habit he had got on many a lonely ride, choosing his horse for confidant.

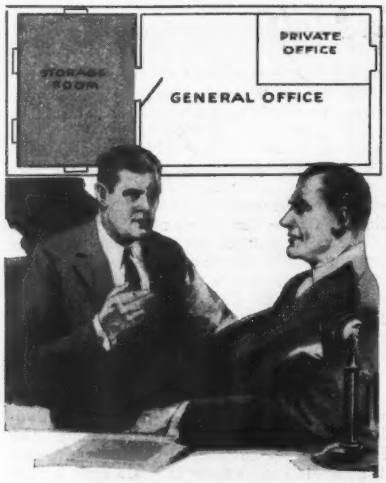
"This is the first time I've been acrost the line since then." His voice was gentle and he was smiling. "Well, it is a heap different now. It was wet hosses then and these——" His eyes went to the canyon mouth and they hardened. The smile vanished from his lips.

Several horsemen were riding down from the low hills. He saw the glint of sunlight on a rifle barrel and a little puff of smoke; the weapon's flat report came to his ears. One of his vaqueros had pitched forward from the saddle and was lying asprawl among the fragments of talus; the others had whirled their ponies and were fleeing down the long slope.

Cheyenne was on his feet and as he hurried toward his saddle-horse the rattle of the approaching hoofs grew louder. The animal lifted its head and began to move away.

"Easy, boy." It stopped at the soothing voice and he gained its side. The Mexicans went thundering past. A spurt of gravel fragments rose at Cheyenne's feet, and he heard the angry buzz of a slug close by. He glanced up the slope; two of the riders had dismounted and thin wisps of smoke rose above the places where they were lying.

"Those fellers are ol' hands," he said as he pulled his rifle from its sheath beneath the stirrup-leather. "I reckon this ain't goin' to be so easy." He flung himself upon the earth and lined his sights on one of the forms up there among the rocks. The pony snorted at the report of the weapon and began trotting away. But he paid no heed to that; it was those horses in the draw that he was thinking of just now; of them and of these riders who were after them.



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They were no Mexicans; he had known that by their hats from the beginning. That they were seasoned fighters was being made more evident at every minute by the nearness of the bullets which snarled past him. When he had fired his third shot, he leaped to his feet and started running toward the doorway of the stone hut. Some bits of flying rock stung his face as he was passing inside. He dropped on the hard earthen floor and brought his rifle to his shoulder again. But the slope between him and the canyon mouth was empty now.

"As long as I'm here," he reflected, "nobody's goin' to be able to cross that ground. And bein' as they ain't a window, they can't rush this place only from the one way." He pumped another cartridge into the breech and shifted his position to make himself more comfortable and then he was conscious of something warm and sticky on his thigh. He glanced down and saw a dark red stain spreading over the leg of his breeches. In the excitement of those few moments out there, he had not felt the bullet when it struck.

While he was binding his handkerchief above the spot where the blood was welling through the fabric a sudden sense of weakness came over him; his head was swimming and the walls of the hut seemed to be moving. He shut his teeth and tied the knot with numbing fingers; then he inserted the barrel of his revolver and twisted it until the ligature was biting into the muscles. Small beads of sweat were standing out on his forehead when he had done, and his arms had grown heavy so that he could hardly move them to lift his rifle.

The hillside was still empty save for the body of the slain vaquero. He could see a buzzard hovering in the sky above it. The time went by. It might have been an hour—he did not know. He only knew that the blood was still oozing from the wound and he was growing weaker.

Outside, somewhere near by, a voice sounded. "Come through that door with your hands up," it said.

He would have liked to answer with profane defiance, but he was afraid his voice would betray the weakness of his body. So he remained silent.

There came to him the knowledge of what must take place. The hard-eyed rustlers driving the band of horses up across the border. The people at the ranch-house waiting for his return—Bill Savage and his wife and Molly. Waiting for some word from him. And none would come.

The vaqueros were hired riders whom he had picked up, and he understood that type of Mexican well enough to be certain they would never tell their story lest they be accused of complicity in his murder. They would simply disappear. And he would disappear. And that would be the last of it—excepting that they would remember him up there at the ranch-house. They would remember him and they would wonder what had happened to him and to those horses with which he had been entrusted. There would be nothing on which their faith in him could rest, save what they had known of him. And that was very little.

He shut his teeth more tightly, for the weakness was mounting from his limbs. He could feel it rising over his body. It seemed to him that he heard footsteps outside the wall. They were coming toward the door from both sides. In a moment they would make their rush. He was thinking of Molly as he gripped his rifle and strove to press the butt closer against his shoulder, and that was the last he knew.

So the outlaws found him when they made their rush, lying limp and senseless with the weapon beside him on the earthen floor.

The eastern sky was still glowing with the tints of sunrise when Bill Savage came out on the long veranda to find Molly there before him. She looked around at the sound of his footstep and pointed to the south. He stood for some moments gazing across the tawny plain.

"I reckon yo'r eyes are better'n mine, Molly," he told her gently; but a moment later he spoke again and a change had come into his voice. "Yo're right, Sis. Someone is comin'."

Away to the southward, near the meeting-place of earth and sky, the faint dust signal of a moving herd was rising like a wisp of smoke. And as the two of them watched, it darkened, taking on more definite outline.

"Hosses," Bill Savage said. "It moves too fast for cattle."

Within the house young Mrs. Savage heard their voices and came out to slip her arm about her sister. So the three of them remained standing on the veranda, watching the approaching dust cloud. The time slipped by; the sun was casting sharp shadows on the plain below the mesa where the ranch-house stood.

At last they were able to distinguish the forms of the horses shrouded in the thin brown haze. They came trotting on with upraised heads, now halting to search for wisps of dry feed, now falling into a trot once more as the others came pressing on them from the rear. The cattleman had ceased to regard them. It was the riders who were monopolizing his attention.

"Those ain't vaqueros," he muttered.

The band came near. One of the riders shot forward passing its front, to fling himself from the saddle at the entrance of the thousand-acre pasture and let down the bars. Other horsemen sped in on either side to turn the leaders. While the ponies galloped to and fro, Bill Savage continued to search the dust clouds for Cheyenne.

The last of the band were passing into the enclosure. The dust was settling. The unknown herders had wheeled their ponies and were riding off into the south whence they had come. One man was left. His head was bowed; his body was sagging in the saddle. He came slowly up the mesa toward the ranch-house, and the watchers on the veranda saw it was Cheyenne. His face was white and there was pain in the lines about his lips when they hurried out to meet him.

"Help me off, Bill," he said to the cattleman, but his eyes were on Molly all the time.

On the ranch-house porch he told the story. When he came to the place where he had swooned, he looked away from Molly's face for the first time and pointed after the receding forms of the strange horsemen, growing faint where the long flat began to take on the mysteries of distance.

"Those are the men I was fightin'," he said quietly, "and they're a hard bunch—outlawed every one of 'em. But the leader of the gang—the big he wolf among 'em—is a fellow by the name of Brazos. Five years ago, it happened, me and him was pardners and I did him a good turn——" He recited briefly the tale of the wet horses, and when he had finished. "He recognized me when they rushed the house and found me lyin' on the floor. So he took care of me, and as soon as I could travel, he made those renegades drive the hosses up here."

An hour later Molly and Cheyenne were alone on the veranda.

"Next month," he announced, "Bill says I'm to take charge of the San Pedro ranch. Are you goin' with me, little girl?"

She came closer to him until her head was resting on his shoulder and she uttered a sigh, for the passing of her ordeal had left her weary in this moment of her happiness.

"This morning," she answered, "we'll tell them, dear."

Just how much need there was of that, one may judge from the tenor of another conversation which was going on at the same time in the living-room, where young Mrs. Savage was relieving herself of something which was still upon her mind.

"Not that I'm opposed to their marrying," she declared, "but, after all, it was horse stealing, Bill."

"I wish, Sweet," he replied, "yo'd find some other name for it. Yo' see—Cheyenne don't know it, but I was one of the fellers back there in San Antone five years ago that was buyin' those wet hosses."

Money to Burn

(*Continued from page 75*)

came down-stairs to the telephone-booth.

"Fahey talkin'."

"This is your female accomplice, Mr. Fahey. Please forgive me for getting you out of bed, but I have news of importance to communicate. I followed those people. They hired a car at the Main Street garage and Charley told Mr. Bass, the night manager, that he wanted to hire it for himself and his wife. Mark that. *Himself and his wife.* Go right down to see Mr. Bass and remind him that he rented a car tonight to a man and his wife and see that he remembers it so well he will not be liable to forget it."

"That wife stuff is *good!*"

"Well, that couple are now asleep at the Garden City Hotel, in San José, and registered as Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Skidmore, of Los Angeles."

"Naughty, naughty!"

"This is a decent, respectable county, Mr. Fahey. We believe in conserving morals and protecting the home and we have no sympathy for strangers who play fast and loose with the reputations of our hotels. I'm scandalized."

"I'm blushin' like a rose myself," said Detective-Sergeant Fahey. "Now, lemme get the straight of this. About nine o'clock tomorrow mornin' them two indiscreet people will be boardin' the Shore Line Limited to return to Los Angeles. Well, here's where I miss a whole lot more sleep. I suppose you want me to drive up to San José, have a confidential talk wit' the chief of police an' ask him, as a courtesy to a brother chief, to pinch Charley an' Mae on a charge of social vagrancy, chuck 'em into stir an' make the bail the limit.

"That'll mean they'll have to stay in stir until they can raise bail. Maybe they can't. Maybe they ain't got friends that can be reached in a hurry. Still, that lawyer of theirs might bail them out, but on the other hand he might not. He'd probably get suspicious an' figure your little boy friend had been too smart for him.

"Why, of course he'll be suspicious an' drop that case like it was a hot stove. I'll see to that myself. I'll phone Fitzgerald an' he'll phone that lawyer an' tell him, anonymously, that his clients have got all tangled up in a dictograph, complicated with the purity squad."

"You're such a comfort, Mr. Fahey," Nellie cooed. "Of course they won't have any defense, unless they can produce a marriage certificate——"

"I know they can't do that, an' if they do, their case against Elmer is a wash-out. It's a wash-out anyway. Well, little partner, we can't very well land 'em for attempted blackmail without draggin' your man into the case, so I guess we'll have to wait till next time, but in the meantime——" He paused significantly.

"Yes, yes, go on! You're doing fine, Mr. Fahey. You were about to say?"

"We'll get them a quick trial in the San José police court before they can get bail, find 'em guilty an' send 'em to the county jail for three months."

"Oh, make it six!" Nellie pleaded. "With credit for good behavior they'll be out altogether too soon. It only costs a few dollars to file a suit, and nothing at all for publicity. That woman will do that for revenge as soon as she gets out, no matter what happens to her. Elmer can't afford it."

"Well, seein' as how you ask it, I'll make it six months. That's the limit. Consider it done! Me, I've been tryin' cases in the judge's chambers for ten years. That's the only way us dicks can get any justice or recognition. Good night! Sleep tight!"

A week later Nellie Cathcart received by registered mail a small cardboard box. Upon opening it she discovered it contained a small gold shield bearing the legend: Honorary Detective-Sergeant, Los Angeles Police Department. The shield bore a number also—No. 1!

In fact, that week everybody received something. Colorado Charley and Mae, to their

What the Close-up Reveals



Scene from "So This Is Paris" featuring Patsy Ruth Miller —a Warner Bros. star.

Beauty—

She knew the stage value of beauty—beauty of form—of action—of costume.

With rare good taste, she chose every detail of her wardrobe. Her shoes were exquisite—selected for their matchless beauty and for those in-built qualities which enhanced her grace and beauty of movement.

Every woman may have footwear of the same refined elegance—the same inherent, grace-giving features—by choosing the famous FOOT SAVER SHOES.

The "close-up" of the Foot Saver Shoe reveals its surpassing beauty, its smart, distinctive style. *But you must wear Foot Savers* to appreciate their perfect, easy fitting—to really know the supreme satisfaction of footwear that supports the arch scientifically and directs the movement of the foot with such wonderful ease and grace. Decide now your next shoes will be *Foot Savers.*

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great bewilderment, were given six months in the county jail and blamed Elmer Clarke for it. Mae even wrote to him accusing him of it but bidding him refrain from thinking he was little Jack Horner, since every dog must have his day.

Alas! Mae was counting her chickens before they were hatched, for immediately upon his return to Los Angeles, Detective-Sergeant Lipowsky decided to strike a blow for true love. He knew a burglar who was also an expert at opening ordinary safes. So he burglarized the office of Colorado Charley's attorney, and presently Elmer Butterworth Clarke received by ordinary mail a large fat envelop. It contained his love-letters to Mae, alias Doris.

Simultaneously, from another anonymous source, he received a clipping from a San José paper. It contained the story of the arrest and conviction of Joseph Skidmore and his companion, and since the story had been illustrated with pictures, Elmer was no longer in doubt of a very significant fact, to wit: that God had been very good to him, indeed.

Prior to the arrival of Colorado Charley and Mae at his house that night, nobody, not even astute Nellie Cathcart, could have imagined the extent of Elmer Clarke's terror and suffering. He felt exactly as he had always felt in France when his unit was in reserve but waiting to be ordered up to the front. Once under fire, however, he would say to himself: "Well, here's where I die. I can't escape this, so I might as well quit worrying and make the best of it for the few minutes I may have to live. I'm not brave but I'll act as if I am."

This old comforting philosophy had animated him the moment he had come face to face with Colorado Charley and Mae. The sight of them, as a matter of fact, had infuriated him and, fury displacing fear, he had grown suddenly light-hearted. His attack had completely upset the calculations of the blackmailers; on the instant their plans crumbled. As they disappeared through his door a feeling of peace after victory settled over Elmer Clarke's sturdy soul.

Elmer Clarke retired to his virtuous couch and slept the sleep of the conscience-free and the healthy. At breakfast next morning he had a telephone call from Nellie, who declared she was simply bursting with curiosity. He *must* take her to luncheon that day and tell her all about his interview with those terrible people.

Elmer accepted with alacrity and when he and Nellie found themselves in a booth at the Palace Grill he gave her a detailed account of his adventure. Nellie noticed that Elmer did not pat himself on the back.

"I was scared to death, Nellie," he confided, "but it would never have done to let them know I was, so I bluffed my way through."

"Do you think the incident is closed?" Nellie queried innocently.

"I do not. I'm going to be the laughing-stock of this town sooner or later—unless I buy those letters from them. I'm not. I'll stand for their fire. It will be horrible, but I'll stand for it."

"You appear to have eliminated my point of view from your considerations, Elmer. How do you know I can manage to stand up under that ridicule of you? Don't you think it will hurt me terribly?"

"Would it?" he queried eagerly. "I'd like to think so. I'd like to think you love me still, with all my faults. Do you, darling?"

"You'll have to go on guessing. I have some womanly pride, you know, and you have jarred it frightfully."

"I've been a dog," he murmured sadly. "It serves me right. Of course I have the nerve of a lion tamer to ask this, but—will you give me another chance, Nellie? Will you take me back—on probation?"

"I accept. I'll take you back—not as a sweetheart but as the dear old friend you were before you told me you loved me and asked me to marry you. Meanwhile, you are not to run away from Pilarcitos. You must stay here and make your campaign for mayor."

"I can never be elected mayor now," he assured her. "That suit and the publication of my letters to Doris——"

"Were they love-letters, Elmer?"

He hung his head. "I tried to make them sound that way, but I don't think they were as enthusiastic as ones I could have written you under the same circumstances. Still, I suppose they're silly enough to tickle Pilarcitos to death. They'll be hard for me to laugh off."

"Take the chance," she urged.

Elmer shook his head dolefully. "I dare not —now."

"But you announced your candidacy with a blare of trumpets, as it were. You'll have to enter the fight now."

Elmer shuddered. "But I never intended to run for mayor this year," he protested lamely. "I was merely announcing myself as a candidate to run against the incumbent when he came up for reelection, as I figured he would. Now the infernal kill-joy has disappointed everybody by resigning and moving out of the county, the city council is deadlocked over the appointment of his successor and in order to save their faces they have ordered a special election to decide who shall be mayor to fill the unexpired term. So you see, Nellie, I've got an excellent excuse for withdrawing now. I can say I do not care to make a campaign for the unexpired term, because it will not afford me an opportunity to initiate reforms. All my friends will understand——"

"You remind me of a small boy who whistles up his courage as he passes the cemetery after dark. Elmer, you know very well that if you are elected to fill the unexpired term and make good you can be elected for the next two-year term without half trying."

"No, I cannot. I'll make an announcement in the Clarion that, upon further consideration, I find that my business affairs will not permit of my making the race and accordingly I am withdrawing my candidacy."

"If you do that," Nellie assured him, "you might as well abandon all hope of marrying me eventually. I could never stand a quitter. I want you to enter that fight even if you do lose it."

He squirmed in his chair. "The very thought of it makes me shudder, Nellie. Have a heart! Permit me to withdraw now, marry me and go away with me—to France or Italy—anywhere to escape. Then when the blow falls I'll not be here to be laughed at. Nothing in this world can be of surpassing interest for more than nine days, and in a year or two from now when we return the whole miserable affair will have been forgotten."

"I dare say, Elmer. In that length of time you will have been forgotten, too. You will have lost your leadership, so essential to your future here. You must remain here and build up your leadership."

"Then marry me and help me stand it."

"No, I had nothing to do with getting you into this jam and you'll have to fight your own way out. If you do that, however, the day I find it out I'll marry you. But if you quit, if you run—count me out of your calculations."

He groaned inwardly.

"You haven't the slightest conception of a woman's pride, Elmer," Nellie went on with motherly tenderness. "That adventuress is trying to break you, to run you out of your own country. I'm trying to make you, to keep you from being run out. The question therefore resolves itself into this: who is going to win? You are the only human being who can decide that question, and I call upon you to decide it here and now or forfeit, not only the fragments of my former love for you, but my future friendship and respect for you. Speak up, Elmer, or remain forever silent!"

"You win," he declared without an instant's hesitation. "I don't care what happens to me provided I do not humiliate you again. I can take a licking, you know."

"Smiling, I hope."

"Well, at any rate, in silence."

"That remains to be seen," said Nellie darkly. "Your courage and sportsmanship are going to be tested in a manner of which you little dream. Our future happiness depends upon how well or how poorly you emerge from that test."

Elmer thought of his love-letters to Doris and shuddered again.

"You're not eating anything," Nellie challenged him suddenly. "Why, you haven't taken a single bite!"

"If I did I'd feel as vulgar and insensate as a pig," he replied.

"Cheer up, Elmer. There is no hell."

"Well, then, I'm up to my ears in something just as hot." He eyed her half angrily. "And you're the little devil that's stoking the fire."

Nellie half rose from her chair and leaned across the table toward him. "Kiss me, booby!" she commanded fiercely. And Elmer obeyed.

Up to the day he received, from that anonymous Los Angeles source, the letters he had written his inamorata, Elmer made no progress in the matter of mapping out his campaign for mayor. He was much too nervous, too overwhelmed with grave apprehensions, to focus his mind on this adventure which could only end in disaster. He spent his days fishing and his nights in gloomy meditation.

Longfellow, in his "Hiawatha," observes that misfortunes come not singly. The poet might, with equal truth, have written that blessings come in flocks. Suddenly came the letter from Doris, charging him with the perpetration of a newer and more despicable crime and vowing vengeance when her time should be up. The receipt of the newspaper clipping solved the mystery of the girl's letter and while Elmer was rejoicing at this infallible evidence of a stay of execution, and making up his mind to make the fur fly in his campaign for mayor now that fate had intervened and given him a fighting chance to win, the packet of love-letters arrived.

The comfort that had been his just previous to this was the most extravagant grief in comparison with the delirious delight that descended upon him now.

It was the greatest day in history. When his paroxysm of delight had in a measure abated, he proceeded to read the letters in the order of their dates.

After reading the third letter he shook as with an ague, for he discovered that he had indeed asked Doris to marry him! He essayed to read the fourth letter and groaned aloud. It was terrible. So he burned them all.

He was waiting outside the bank when Nellie came out at five o'clock. "Hop into this car and come away with me, Nellie," he ordered, "or I'll kidnap you."

Nellie hopped in, and they whirled away into the country. Once clear of the town Elmer's hand stole over and closed over Nellie's. She jerked it away, but he seized her arm roughly and again possessed himself of her hand, which he retained by brute force. Still he said nothing, so Nellie maintained silence. Presently she spoke, to break an embarrassing silence.

"What have you been doing all day, Elmer?"

"I've been singing."

"Bet you a hundred dollars I know what you've been singing."

"Taken. What have I been singing?"

"The national anthem of Siam."

"You lose. I don't know it."

"Oh, yes, you do!"

"What's it called?"

"WhatanassIam," she informed him.

Without a moment's hesitation Elmer Butterworth Clarke took out his wallet and solemnly handed Nellie Cathcart a hundred-dollar bill. and Nellie took it!

When Elmer rose the following morning he remembered that if he intended to be Mayor of Pilarcitos it behooved him to be up and doing. He had no time to spare.

After breakfast he wrote a dignified announcement for the Clarion. This paper had supported him vigorously in his campaign for high school trustee, but Elmer, wise in the ways of small-town politics, realized that it was altogether improbable that he should



A Story in Nutshells

Review again a few of those well known slogans which Dodge Brothers have published on the Nation's billboards during the past eleven years—

A Good Name
Dependable
Dollar for Dollar
Long Life
World-Wide Good Will
Better Than Ever

To build a product of which these things can truthfully be said, is a record of which any great organization might well be proud.

And it explains the implicit faith that millions everywhere repose in the integrity of Dodge Brothers and in the goodness of the motor cars they build.

Sedan $895—Special Sedan $945
De Luxe Sedan $1075—f. o. b. Detroit

DODGE BROTHERS, INC. DETROIT
DODGE BROTHERS (CANADA) LIMITED
TORONTO, ONTARIO

DODGE BROTHERS
MOTOR CARS

receive editorial support in his campaign for mayor. The Clarion was supported by the advertising of local business men and the local business men, Elmer knew, would be a unit for one of his opponents. In order, therefore, to secure passive opposition or no opposition at all, he made one of those tactful moves of which he was singularly capable.

"Now, see here," he announced frankly, "I want to contract with you right now for a half-page ad, to be run triweekly until election day. I do not expect your editorial support. All I ask is that, when you do have to mention me, you do so as kindly and fairly as you can."

Then with careless abandon he gave quite a large order for quarter cards, dodgers, banners, pennants and campaign buttons to the Clarion's job-printing department; furthermore, knowing the editor was never more than one jump ahead of the sheriff, he magnanimously paid for all this work in advance. That settled the matter of the Clarion's attitude. The editor decided immediately to play safe and support nobody. Elmer's next move was to contract with the Pilarcitos Silver Cornet Band to play at his political rallies exclusively, thus forcing his opponents to import their music expensively from surrounding towns.

The extent of his advertising and the elaborate preparations for his campaign alarmed and irritated his opponents, the alarm being occasioned by first-hand knowledge that they were being opposed by a young, forceful, popular man, without a blemish on his character and with an excellent war record. His strength in fraternal circles was well known, and of course he would get the old soldier vote in its entirety. The irritation of the enemy was born of an apprehension that if they were to oppose him successfully they would have to adopt the pace he had set, which predicated the spending of more money than they cared to think about. Also, they would have to make speeches they were incapable of making with a tithe of the ease, grace and logic of their youthful opponent.

Their best plan lay in ancient political strategy.

By mutual consent the Democratic and the Republican candidates concluded to refrain from fighting each other and concentrate their fire on Elmer.

To Elmer competition was the joy of life. He had been born with the winning spirit and he resolved to leave no stone unturned to secure his objective. However, he overlooked one stone. Nellie Cathcart called it to his attention.

"I suppose, Elmer, you're going to spend a couple of thousand dollars to win an office that pays a salary of one hundred dollars a month."

"I suppose so. The confounded job is really a nuisance, but now that I'm in the race I'm not going to let a little money stand in the way of victory."

"Well, you had better form the Elmer B. Clarke Campaign Committee and permit it to spend that money," she suggested. "Name the committee and appoint me treasurer. You have already spent as much money as you are permitted to spend under the law; if you spend more, you will violate the purity of the election law; if you win, your enemies will check up on you after the election, indict you, convict you and deprive you of your hard-won office."

"But I can't pass the hat for my campaign expenses," he protested, bewildered.

"Organize your finance committee, head the subscription list with a fifty-dollar donation and open an account in Anse Moody's bank. Then send your bills to me and, as treasurer, I will pay them."

"But how?"

"Never mind how. As treasurer that will be my worry. You stick to your knitting."

"But where can you get the money?"

"I'll get it somewhere. Elmer, did you ever see a cat reconnoiter a hole in a fence? He sticks his head through and if his whiskers touch he knows he cannot get his body through, so he climbs over the fence. Well, I'm going to crawl through this hole without touching my financial whiskers."

She did. She gave the Pilarcitos Commercial Trust & Savings Bank a second mortgage for two thousand dollars on the property she had bought from Elmer Clarke, and old Anse Moody charged her ten percent interest on the loan and refused to make it for more than a year. This money she deposited to the credit of the Elmer B. Clarke Campaign Committee, and on the day after the election she paid her last bill, closed up her account and had four hundred dollars left.

And on election day Elmer received two votes in excess of the total votes cast for his opponents. It was a stupendous, a sweeping victory, and the politically wise ascribed it to but one thing, to wit, tremendous public admiration for Elmer Clarke's modesty. Throughout the campaign he had not once addressed the local lodge of the American Legion, nor had he appeared at any meetings of it. He had made absolutely no appeal for the old soldier vote, either verbally or in print; not once had he referred to his war record and cited the fact that he had been in the army. Everybody in Pilarcitos had felt certain Elmer would wave the bloody shirt, and he had disappointed them; wherefore, in gratitude and admiration, they had elected him.

Nellie was far happier than Elmer when the votes were counted. Elmer had a rather well-defined idea that he had labored and brought forth a mouse—that he had fought for the sheer love of a fight. Now that he had a certificate of election he shuddered to think he would have to use it. But Nellie, her plans for his career long since made, merely checked off another mile-stone on the road to the heights; and when Elmer, having taken his oath of office, secured a two-weeks' leave of absence from the city council in order to rest after his furious campaign, Nellie was relieved to be rid of him, even for that brief period. Elmer betook himself again to Los Angeles, but Nellie did not keep an eye on him this time. She knew Elmer had had an ample sufficiency of wandering in strange pastures and that the next damsel who "sold him a pup" would have to be adroit to a degree something more than humanly possible.

Upon his return Elmer devoted himself assiduously to his duties as mayor for three months; during which period he saw as much of Nellie as possible. Then, having secured a sixty-day leave of absence from the city council, he departed on his long-deferred trip to Muscatine, Iowa, to settle the estate of his late Uncle Hiram.

For some mysterious reason Nellie was very distrait the night before he left. In the stuffy parlor of the old Tully home they said good-by and Elmer was amazed to see her go completely out of control for the first time in their acquaintance. She put her arms around his neck and wept for about five minutes. Elmer was mystified.

In vain Elmer reminded her that he would wire her frequently—long night letters; that he would write her daily and send his letters by air mail; that he would telephone her every Saturday night.

She refused to be comforted and continued to sob:

"Oh, Elmer, you poor boy! You good, kind-hearted, decent old thing, I—I—want you to—to promise—whatever happens, you'll—come back—t-t-to me, darling."

"Why, of course I'll come back to you, Nellie! Why, I won't even look at another girl!"

"I don't mean that. I'm thinking of something else—no matter what—and I want you—b-b-back. Oh, Elmer, I want you to come back j-j-just as s-s-soon as the estate is—c-c-closed."

"Ho-ho!" he laughed. "So that's the way the cat jumps, eh? You're afraid I'll collect my roll and start wandering. You're afraid I'll wander so long and so far I'll forget you, eh? Hum-m! A fat chance. Twenty-four hours after that estate is definitely closed I'll be aboard the rattler headed home—but only on one condition."

"I kn-kn-know. Provided I marry you shortly after you return."

"That's the program. How about it, sweetheart?"

"Well, if you'll come back I'll marry you, Elmer. You'll never have to ask me again. All you'll have to do will be to—n-n-name the day."

"I'll wire you the date before I start West. Word of honor now, Nellie, that nothing—understand, *nothing*—can induce you to change your mind?"

"Word of honor, Elmer. And will you give me your word of honor that you'll come right back to me when the estate is settled?"

"I do—and I hope my teeth may drop out if I do not."

"And you'll not permit anything—*anything in all the world*—to make you break your promise?"

"I'd rather be a hungry tramp, without a place to lay my head, than break the least of my promises to you."

She kissed him half a dozen times and thrust him gently out of the door, which she closed upon him and then ran up-stairs to her room to have a *real* cry.

Thus did they part.

Mr. Absolom McPeake's secretary came into his office and handed him the card of Mr. Elmer Butterworth Clarke. Employer and employee gazed at each other humorously.

"Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!" murmured McPeake.

"It's much too bad," his secretary declared. "Such a nice-looking young man, too."

"Does he bear a family resemblance to that terrible old uncle of his?"

"About as much as a hunting-watch resembles a grandfather's clock. Shall I show him in?"

"I suppose so. Let's have it over with."

A moment later Elmer was ushered in. McPeake greeted him cordially and after a few minutes spent in polite amenities Elmer ventured to inquire in what condition the estate might be.

"In very excellent shape indeed, Mr. Clarke. All of the minor bills of the estate have been paid, with the exception of current monthly charges; the appraisers have completed their task, their report has been filed and about all that remains to be done is to pay the federal and state income taxes and inheritance taxes, the cost of probate, my fee as executor and attorney for the estate, the few specific bequests contained in your uncle's will and that old mortgage."

"I supposed you had paid the mortgage to avoid interest charges," Elmer remarked.

"Not yet. There isn't sufficient money in the estate to pay it."

"Strange! I gathered from your first advices to me that there was quite a sum on hand in cash, and also a couple of hundred thousand dollars' worth of marketable securities. I also understood that this mortgage was for a sum of forty thousand dollars."

"That is the principal sum. Perhaps I'd better start in at the beginning and tell you the story as your uncle told it to me the day he made his will."

"Perhaps that would be better," Elmer suggested.

McPeake thereupon permitted the blow to fall. For about ten seconds Elmer stared at him unwinkingly—then a slow, amused smile lighted up his face. "So forty thousand dollars, at eight percent, compounded semi-annually for forty-two years, amounts to all that, eh? Suffering mudcats! I should have known there was a catch in this will somewhere!" And he laughed gently.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Clarke, but there's no way out for us. The record speaks for itself, your uncle's will gives us no alternative, and the next of kin to Benedict Catheron has been discovered and has proved her case." McPeake looked his visitor over humorously. "I could



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furnish you with her name and address," he suggested. "Then you might hunt her up, court her, marry her and get the money back into the family."

"Thanks. Not interested. There's a girl back in Pilarcitos, California, who claims all of my sentimental attention. I hope to tell you I wouldn't lose her for a sum equal to the national debt."

"Bully for you, Mr. Clarke! And by the way, I must say I have never seen a man take such a loss with a smile before. I'll say you're game."

"Can't lose what I never had, Mr. McPeake. Really, I'm not thinking of my blasted hopes at all. What I feel like doing is not to weep but to give three long, loud, raucous cheers for Uncle Hiram. The old man finally did manage to do something fine and decent and magnificent before he shuffled off, didn't he? I was afraid his record was going to be blank, but he came through like a sport at the finish, so I'm for him. By the way, was the record of this old mortgage among his papers?"

"Oh, yes! Your uncle never destroyed anything."

"Well, if I had found it, I would have suspected that the mortgage had not been paid, otherwise there would have been a copy of the release among his papers. So I would have run the record down and paid it myself. Uncle Hiram worried unnecessarily."

"You would have paid it yourself—with interest compounded?"

"Certainly. A note is a note, just as a bet is a bet."

"But I—well, Mr. Clarke, I was going to suggest to you that we might get together with the present holder of that mortgage and effect a settlement. The deficiency judgment is outlawed and if we made a poor mouth and told her that a large portion of the estate consisted of real estate not readily salable, we might get her to abate the compounded interest. Or we might induce her to accept a lot of dead real estate at inflated values—fix it with the appraisers of the estate to reappraise the property."

Elmer raised his hand protestingly. "You're proposing something dirty, mister," he said evenly. "Get this, my friend: All the dirt rights of the Butterworth tribe stood in the name of my late uncle, and I'm not going to join with you or anybody else to take advantage of a woman. A contract's a contract, and if I lost every dollar of the million dollars I thought I had, that's my funeral and I refuse to attend it!"

McPeake was embarrassed. "Well, don't think any the less of me for suggesting it," he pleaded. "Some day you will think more of me for suggesting it." He smiled smugly, after the fashion of one whose head is quite filled with valuable secrets.

"I suppose it's a lawyer's duty to protect his client's interests, and I suppose, too, it is natural that folks should disagree as to what constitutes sporty treatment," Elmer replied grudgingly, "so I'll forget your suggestion. Just don't make another one like it."

"Fair enough. I'll make one the very reverse of it. Mr. Clarke, for more than a quarter of a century your uncle had a very confidential employee—a sort of chief clerk, manager and man Friday—one Bunker. Bunker is one of those mousy little men who are whipped in the battle of life the day they come into it. A retiring, timid, faithful, obedient, hard-working, brainy, efficient rabbit of a man. His job with your uncle was the first job he ever had—and he is still on the estate pay-roll, helping me close up odds and ends of business matters.

"Very early in life he made a mistake. He married—and had children—gave hostages to fortune, as it were. So his job was bread and butter and he never had the courage to quit and seek another. I think it must have occurred to your uncle, from time to time, that the impossible might happen and he would lose Bunker's services, so he promised Bunker he would leave him one hundred thousand dollars in his will. This promise he reiterated from time to time, but when it came to making his will he betrayed Bunker. Cut him off with ten thousand dollars—and if I had not fought him all over the office he would have let Bunker down with five thousand. Poor Bunker is heart-broken, of course." McPeake paused and looked at Elmer meaningly.

"And you are about to propose that I make up the deficit, eh?" Elmer suggested.

"Exactly."

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it, and first we will ascertain whether or not we have a bridge to cross. I am a young man but I have made this discovery. The Bunkers of this world receive from the world exactly what they merit. Nobody but a fool—and a particularly dumb sort of fool—could work for my Uncle Hiram for more than a quarter of a century and not know that he was inhuman, that he would lie and take brutal advantage of people. I dare say Bunker was important to him because Bunker was so weak he would do the dirty little deeds his master ordered him to do. Is that not so?"

"Well, I'm afraid that, in a certain sense, you are right, Mr. Clarke."

"You bet I'm right. I do not have to see Bunker to know the sort of man he is. I have little pity and little love for such men, and it is a question in my mind whether, by fulfilling my uncle's insincere, unmeant promise, I would be doing Bunker a real kindness. The money would probably turn his head."

"Well, I'll let Bunker argue his own case," McPeake decided. "Now then, our principal debtor is insistent on having the cash, and the only way the cash can be secured is to sell off the real estate belonging to the estate. The properties are covered with old buildings in a bad state of repair, but the income from rents is excellent."

"Are the properties salable?"

"At a price—yes."

"Well, if we hang on until they are salable at a fair price we may be years closing this estate, and in the meanwhile that mortgage will continue to draw eight percent compounded semiannually. That's no business, Mr. McPeake. Get an order of court to sell that property at public auction."

"My idea exactly, Mr. Clarke. Your decision does credit to your common sense and business instincts."

"What have you done with that little private banking business—or was it a pawnbroking establishment?"

"I've sold it at a very good figure and the probate court has approved the sale."

"When the estate is finally settled, what do you think my share will amount to?"

"Oh, I should say, offhand, a quarter of a million dollars."

"Well, I'll always be a millionaire in Pilarcitos. I've been duly advertised as such and while I continue to pay my bills I'll have the credit rating of a millionaire. That will help. I can go just as far on credit as I can on cash. Just won't go so fast, that's all." He rose to go. "Think I'll go on to New York and see some good shows," he informed McPeake. "Despite the walloping you've handed me, I think I can afford a month or two of Broadway. After all, a quarter of a million is better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick. I'll hang around Muscatine a few days and sign any papers you may require."

He took a cheerful departure. The instant the door closed behind him McPeake rang for his secretary. "I've always heard that out in California they grow things big," he informed her. "Big potatoes, big pumpkins, big cattle and big boost, but if Elmer B. Clarke is a sample of her manhood, California grows the biggest men I ever hope to see. That boy certainly can take a licking standing up.

"Take a letter to Miss Nellie Cathcart, care Pilarcitos Commercial Trust and Savings Bank, Pilarcitos, California. 'Dear Miss Cathcart: Your sweetie arrived today and without any preliminary warning I slipped him the fatal tidings, but withholding your identity, of course. He can lose a million dollars

and put his bright day-dreams behind him with as much grace and humor as if he reckoned his loss in depreciated German marks instead of good red U. S. gold coin. I'm for him all the way. He's a man, and should you permit him to escape you will suffer an irreparable loss. He uses his head entirely for thinking. Pilarcitos is lucky to have him for its mayor-elect. Please see to it that politics doesn't spoil him. Yours sincerely.'

"Now make out a petition to the probate court for the sale of all of the real estate of the Butterworth estate, and I'll have Mr. Clarke and Bunker sign it. Then make out an order of sale for the court to sign, and in about a month from now we'll distribute the estate and send Elmer Clarke back to win the capital prize in the best little love lottery you ever heard of. He won only to lose, and he will lose only to win. That Nellie Cathcart must be a very unusual woman. She had a curiosity to discover whether or not Elmer Clarke could fit Kipling's recipe for manhood. Remember the lines?

> If you can meet with triumph and disaster,
> And treat those two impostors both the same.

Well, I'm banking on Elmer."

The following afternoon, when Elmer again called at McPeake's office, he found Bunker there. The lawyer introduced them. Elmer greeted the old clerk pleasantly but without enthusiasm, and McPeake saw by his quick appraising glance that he was striving to find in Bunker's personality a reasonable excuse to be decent to the old fellow.

They chatted together for an hour and then Bunker withdrew.

"Well, what do you think of Bunker, now that you've met and talked to him?"

"He's a furtive little old rat," Elmer declared promptly. "He took on the protective coloration of his surroundings. Like all weak men, he could, I think, be very cruel. I've been thinking over his case and I've decided not to make him a gift of ninety thousand dollars. I cannot afford the philanthropy, and whenever I turn philanthropist Bunker isn't the sort I'd select as the object of my solicitude. He tells me the old man paid him fifty dollars a month to start and after ten years he was earning two hundred. Not so bad. The federal government doesn't do half so well by its employees. I've slaved ten years and when I quit I wasn't earning two hundred dollars a month. For ten years before he died Uncle Hiram was paying him four hundred dollars a month. As clerks are paid, Bunker has fared far, far better than the majority, and I fail to see where he has any kick coming."

"I had an idea he'd broach the subject to you, Mr. Clarke."

"Probably afraid to do so. Wanted to size me up first and decide whether I was hard or easy. He'll think it over tonight and call to see me at my hotel tomorrow."

"What makes you think he'll do that?"

"Oh, I noted a speculative gleam in his eyes! And it's what I'd do if I were Bunker."

Elmer was right. Shortly after he had breakfasted next morning Bunker called his room from the hotel lobby and asked permission to come up for a conference. Elmer readily granted it and a few minutes later Bunker, hat in hand and nervously shifting from one foot to the other, was standing before him. Elmer permitted him to stand for two minutes; then he decided that the habit of a lifetime is not readily broken and that Bunker was waiting for permission to sit down.

"Please be seated," he told the old clerk. "I see you have something on your mind. You appear to be somewhat embarrassed."

"I am, Mr. Clarke. There is a little matter —perhaps Mr. McPeake spoke to you about it——"

"He did," Elmer interrupted. "You refer to my uncle's broken promise to leave you a hundred thousand dollars for the honest and faithful service you accorded him for more than a quarter of a century. I understand he let you down with a bequest for ten thousand, and



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that you are grievously disappointed. I would be too, under the circumstances. I can very well understand your disappointment."

"It's been heart-breaking," Bunker quavered. "After all these years, and my wife building hopes on it, sir, the blow well-nigh killed her."

Elmer nodded. "Still, Uncle Hiram didn't pay you a niggardly salary, Mr. Bunker. Many men in your position earn much less and do not consider themselves ill-treated."

"They don't do the work I had to do," Bunker protested with sudden vehemence. "It's worth four hundred dollars a month to lie and bully and evade and scheme and take advantage of people. That's what I had to do to earn my four hundred dollars a month. It was worth four thousand a month to have to spend ten hours a day in his society."

"I suppose you knew, from years of experience, exactly the sort of man my uncle was?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!"

"Then why did you believe him when he promised to leave you a hundred thousand dollars in his will?"

"I didn't think he'd cheat me. I'd done so much for him, you know; things he couldn't entrust to another human being."

"You mean dirty work—confidential dirty work, don't you?"

"Well, it wasn't pleasant, Mr. Clarke, but I had to do it."

"Were these jobs dishonest?"

"Yes."

"I think I understand your view-point. A man would have to pay me a fortune to get me to do things like that for him."

"Quite so, quite so. And he didn't do it!" Bunker exclaimed, his voice, in his excitement and anger, growing shrill. "The dirty dog betrayed me."

"And you expect me to remedy the situation by giving you ninety thousand dollars when I collect my inheritance?"

"You could well afford to, sir. I've given my life to help build up that fortune you've inherited."

"But I cannot afford it, Bunker. I may have a quarter of a million dollars left when the estate is probated and all the debts settled. Surely you wouldn't expect me to give you ninety thousand dollars out of that sum."

"I think I've earned it," Bunker charged doggedly.

"Perhaps, perhaps. But it's contrary to my code to pay anybody ninety thousand dollars for doing dirty, dishonest jobs, Mr. Bunker."

"But those dirty, dishonest jobs have redounded to your benefit greatly, Mr. Clarke."

"Nothing doing," Elmer declared flatly. "You lose all along the line, Mr. Bunker. You played your hand very foolishly and if you erred it is not up to me to correct your error. I'm not a human Christmas tree. The interview is at an end, Mr. Bunker. You lose."

Bunker stood up, trembling pitifully. It was evident to Elmer that the man had nerved himself to a degree of courage never before experienced in all his gray, drab life. "Half a loaf is better than none, Mr. Clarke," he half shrieked. "You give me that ninety thousand dollars your uncle promised me or I'll take your fortune away from you."

"Hello, what's this? Blackmail?"

"Call it what you want. I don't care any more. You give me that ninety thousand dollars or something heavy is going to drop on you. I'll bust you wide open if you don't settle with me, Mr. Clarke," he declared.

"Well, don't be so mysterious. Tell me what you've got on me. Perhaps the knowledge may alter my decision. Until you tell me, however, I'll stand pat. I never dodge a rock until it's thrown at me."

Bunker came close and lowered his voice. "For years I kept a double set of books for your uncle—one set for him and one for the collector of internal revenue. I made false entries. Whenever I made a deposit in his bank-account I deposited the exact total of the receipts as shown that day on my false cash-book. The excess money was put in a safe-deposit box, and whenever there was quite a bit of money on hand I bought bonds for him so they couldn't be traced. Why, the record of schemes we put through to fool the income tax collectors would make a book! We defrauded the government out of a couple of hundred thousand dollars since January first, 1913, and I can prove it, because your uncle hadn't been dead ten minutes before I had his honest set of books out of that office and the fake set in the safe. Now, what do you think about that, Mr. Smarty!"

"You're an even dirtier little rat than I gave you credit for being. So unless I give you ninety thousand dollars you will put the experts from the internal revenue department on the trail of the estate, and they'll collect so much taxes illegally withheld——"

"They'll fine the estate—you know they will." Bunker screamed. "They can't do anything to your uncle, but they can fine his estate up to one hundred percent. They won't have any pity on you."

"They ought to fine the estate. I would if I were the collector of internal revenue. Now look here, Bunker—I ought to go to the collector of internal revenue, turn you over to him and have him put you in jail."

"You can't. You can't prove anything, and I've got those books hidden where nobody can find them. Better accept my proposition. You'll get out with something then. If you won't play the game I'll see to it that you get out with exactly what I get—nothing!"

"You forget, Bunker, that you are an accessory before the fact. In the eyes of the law you have committed a felony by aiding and abetting my uncle to defraud the government."

"I know. But when I turn state's evidence they won't do anything to me." Bunker laughed mirthlessly. "That's what immunity baths are for. They pay me for my information."

"Bunker, you're loathsome. Get out of my room. Quick! I don't like to rough-house a little old man like you, but if you're still standing there leering triumphantly at me thirty seconds from now I'll manhandle you. Scat, you polecat!"

Following Bunker's unceremonious departure, Elmer Clarke sat down to do some solid thinking. He had need to, for if Bunker's threat should not prove to be an idle one, he was liable to find himself in a most unenviable position.

"Well, one thing is certain," he decided. "If the collector of internal revenue, egged on by Bunker, should levy on the total residue of the estate, I'll be back, financially, where I was before Uncle Hiram died, but with this exception—I'll be out of a job. Well, I'll soon find another. My health is A-one again, so what the devil do I care for the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, provided I do not have to wait too long to marry Nellie? I can't marry her until I get on my feet again, because the day I marry her she'll be Mrs. Mayor Clarke, of Pilarcitos, and it would never do to have the mayor's wife working in the local bank.

"Why, I almost forgot that I am mayor. I have got a job, after all, and it pays me one hundred dollars a month. Well, I've existed on less. Elmer, old settler, you're not licked at all, but oh, boy, when you get back to Pilarcitos your sense of humor is certainly going to be tested! They're going to tell this joke on you while anybody lives to remember it.

"Yes, indeed, Elmer Clarke, you're right! Pilarcitos isn't going to be a pleasant place for you to live in hereafter, but—you're going to live there because Nellie lives there, because you're the mayor and also a high school trustee, and you can't resign from either job just because you're a public joke. That would be hauling down your flag, which is alien to your nature—besides which, it would be the very finest way of losing Nellie. Guess I'll sing the national anthem of Siam!"

He did—and then decided to await developments. It occurred to him that if Bunker really had such a club to swing he would have swung it most profitably on Uncle Hiram before the latter departed for that mysterious land where income taxes are not. He certainly would not swing it until he had collected his own legacy from the estate, for Bunker was too cunning to make such a maladroit move. Perhaps his threat had been a monumental bluff.

"I think this is a matter I should take up with McPeake," he decided, and forthwith called upon the lawyer. McPeake listened to the incredible tale with a growing disgust manifesting itself on his features.

"You're a shrewd judge of human nature, Mr. Clarke," he declared when Elmer had finished his recital. "Bunker is indeed a rat. I am positive, however, that he is bluffing you. If he had had such a weapon to use on your uncle, he would have used it. Consequently, I think that the best thing to do is to ignore him and proceed with the distribution of the estate. I will hold him in line by withholding his legacy until the very last. The day you get yours, under the decree of final distribution, Bunker will get his—and once you have yours, you should worry as to how the government gets its."

"Well, I'll not accept any money that doesn't belong to me, Mr. McPeake."

"That's all very fine, but wait until you know for a certainty that it doesn't belong to you. A blackmailing charge is not sufficient grounds upon which to base an action of this kind; you cannot possibly be charged with being an accessory after the fact. I think this whole affair is a mare's nest and I advise you to run along to New York, enjoy yourself and return here in about six weeks. I'm certain that nothing will happen until the decree of final distribution is signed; if it doesn't happen then, it will never happen. I have no apprehensions on the matter, Mr. Clarke. Remember, Bunker is an arrant coward."

"Well, perhaps you're right, but I do not think he is bluffing. I don't think he has the courage to bluff. I confess I'm afraid of him."

"Well, I'm not, and the first day he comes in here I'll have him on the carpet and shake him down. I'll write you the results of my inquisition."

So Elmer went on to New York. Five weeks later McPeake wrote him that the real estate had been sold, that all of the debts of the estate had been paid and that a final decree of distribution had been signed by the judge of the probate court. McPeake added that Elmer's share of the estate would amount to approximately $218,000.

Immediately upon receipt of this information Elmer came on to Muscatine and the day after his arrival he was to meet McPeake in the latter's office, receipt for his share of the estate and start for Pilarcitos at four o'clock the same day.

McPeake was in high spirits as Elmer entered his office. "Not a peep out of our friend Bunker," he announced, coming at once to the subject closest to Elmer's heart. "I had him in my office and gave him a bad half-hour, but could not get any admission from him. He talked vaguely of things he could do, but seemed disinclined to do them. I think he was bluffing."

"Had he received his legacy, Mr. McPeake?"

"I handed him his check ten minutes ago. Thought I might as well get rid of him before you arrived." McPeake reached into his desk and drew out a formal typewritten receipt with a check for $218,734.22 attached to it. "Sign here," he ordered—and Elmer signed and pouched his check.

"You will now doubtless desire to look over my accounts," the lawyer continued, and spread before Elmer the final accounting he had prepared for the probate judge. "Here is the statement of the appraised valuation of the estate, with an inventory, and here are all of the vouchers that go with the final accounting. However, I have a client calling in ten minutes, so I suggest that you take all of these papers back to your hotel and study them at your leisure. You might drop in at the bank

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on your way and have that check certified."

Elmer thanked him, gathered up all of the papers and took his departure. The check he had received was on the First National Bank, down-stairs, so Elmer went into the bank first and approached the paying teller's window. "I wish you'd have this check certified," he said, and handed it through the grill work.

The paying teller took it and departed. Five minutes later he returned and handed the check back to Elmer uncertified. "Sorry," he said, "but a distraint warrant has been served on the bank by the local collector of internal revenue, and we are debarred from honoring any further checks on this account."

"I thank you," said Elmer politely and walked out. Up to McPeake's office he went. The client the latter had been expecting had not yet arrived and Elmer went at once into the lawyer's private office

"Well, Bunker has made good," he announced. "I told you I thought he wasn't bluffing. He planned his coup so cleverly that he got his own check, rushed down-stairs and cashed it just before the collector of internal revenue served warrant on the bank. The funds of the estate are all tied up until the government experts have gone over the books."

"Holy jumped-up Jehosaphat!" yelled Absolom McPeake. "No!"

"But yes!"

"I don't believe it!"

"Go down-stairs and ask the paying teller of the First Nationa' Bank. He'll enlighten you. I went down there and he enlightened me."

"Good Lord of love! You're as uninterested as if you had just pulled your last cigar out of your vest pocket and discovered the wrapper was ruined. Haven't you got any finer feelings, man?"

"I don't know," Elmer replied wearily. "I've sort of braced myself for this shock, so I suppose I can't help taking it calmly. What's the use of swearing and crying?"

"The dirty dog!" McPeake raved. "The dirty little snake in the grass to do a thing like this!"

Elmer shrugged. "All I'm hoping is that the collector of internal revenue leaves me enough to pay my few debts. I owe the Pilarcitos Commercial Trust and Savings Bank twenty thousand dollars. If I get that much out of the wreck I'll be back where I started and in a month or two I'll be just as happy as if I had never been a millionaire." He smiled wanly. "You see, I haven't got terribly accustomed to being a millionaire," he added. "Spending money is a fine art and I have never learned it. Cheer up, Mac. If I'd collected all of this inheritance and had got accustomed to living on a million-dollar scale, Bunker's action would have broken my heart."

"You *are* game," McPeake declared admiringly, and called for his secretary. "Get the collector of internal revenue on the line for me," he ordered.

Thereafter for five minutes he listened on the line while the collector of internal revenue talked. Silently McPeake hung up.

"Licked!" he croaked. "Licked to a frazzle!"

"All right, I'm licked," Elmer retorted calmly. "What interests me is to know how I was licked."

"Bunker went to the collector of internal revenue directly after you gave him your ultimatum and turned the real set of books and vouchers over to them, and for five weeks a corps of expert accountants has been experting them. The statute of limitations has run against the income tax returns for 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916 and 1917, but they have you nailed on the returns from then on. They have made up the tax returns for those years as they should have been made up had your uncle made an honest return, and the collector informs me that the estate owes the government two hundred and thirty-one thousand, nine hundred and four dollars and eight cents."

"But they let Bunker get away with his ten thousand dollars," Elmer protested.

"The collector admitted that. Bunker made his bargain with them and the collector considered it good business to play the game with him."

They looked at each other, and presently the slow, amused smile crept around Elmer's mouth. "Mac," he asked, "did you get your fee out of the estate before the crash?"

McPeake shook his head wearily.

"Then the joke's on you," Elmer declared, and stood up. "Tell you what you do," he continued. "You get hold of that collector, run down his accounting and, when you are convinced he is right and we haven't got a leg to stand on, you settle with him on the best basis you can.

"As for me, I'm out. I have neither the time nor the inclination to fight for anything except a living, and the longer I delay that assault the worse off I'll be. I'm about eight months behind the procession now and I'll have to hurry to catch up." He held out his hand. "Good-by, Mac, I'm on my way."

"Where?"

"Back to Pilarcitos."

"But you haven't checked my accounting."

"Not interested. The judge of the probate court will check it, and if he passes it, it will be o. k. Little Elmer Butterworth Clarke is a very busy man. *Adios.*"

"Elmer, I'm terribly sorry," McPeake, friendliest of men, was calling him by his first name.

"Don't waste your sympathy, Mac. I'm one bird in this world who hates sympathy. I've never been able to use any. I'm not even sorry for myself, although, being a human being, I'm more or less disappointed—but not for myself. Uncle Hiram's money would have meant a great deal to the happiness of that girl I told you about, and for her sake I wish Bunker had never been born. But why repine? When the collector of internal revenue proves his case, hand him this with my compliments," and Elmer laid on McPeake's desk the check the latter had so recently handed him. He held out his hand. "Good-by, Mac. Hope you get yours. You've worked for it—which is more than I did. You might write to me from time to time and tell me how you're coming along."

He shook hands and departed.

Back at his hotel, he packed his trunk and suitcase, telephoned down-stairs for his bill and then lay down on his bed to wait for train time. At four o'clock he was homeward bound and three days later he dropped off the Del Monte Flyer at Pilarcitos and made his way on foot up to his house.

He was greeted enthusiastically by Benjy, his old hunting dog, and his colored retainer, Jasper. To the latter he handed the wages due him to date. "I'll not need you any more, Jasper," he announced. "I'm sorry. You're a good servant and faithful, but I can't afford you. I'll dine up-town tonight."

He left the amazed and disappointed Jasper staring after him, went to the telephone and called up Nellie at the bank.

"Elmer speaking, Nellie. I'm home—back home and broke. I'd like to take you out to dinner tonight—probably for the last time—and tell you all about it. Uncle Hiram's estate has melted like a dish of ice-cream on a hot stove. Funniest tale you'll ever listen to, Nellie. Brace yourself for a laugh."

"Oh, Elmer dear! I'm so sorry!" Nellie's voice was pregnant with tears.

"Don't!" he pleaded. "Please do not feel sorry for me, Nellie. Time enough for that when I begin feeling sorry for myself. I've assimilated the grandest thrashing any man ever assimilated, and I can still stand and see and think clearly. Yes, I've taken a thrashing, but I'm not down and out for the count. I've got all kinds of fight left in me yet—you wait and see."

"But, Elmer darling, aren't you simply broken-hearted?"

"No, I'm not. If the absence of money could make me broken-hearted, I'd have died of grief ten years ago. I'm all right. Nothing wrong with me except that I'm so broke I rattle when I walk."

"Well," Nellie replied, "it's all terribly awful, of course, but for all that, I'm happy. You have come back to me and nothing else matters."

"I've come back to you, but not for you," he answered bitterly. "I'm not dog enough to ask you to share my poverty with me. Nellie, you must forget that I was ever selfish enough to ask you to marry me."

"We'll talk that matter over before we decide," she retorted. "Pick me up at the house at seven o'clock."

At seven o'clock Elmer, driving his Bolles-Joyce himself for the last time, called for Nellie and drove her out to Joe Angellotti's road-house for dinner. And there, between the soup and the nuts, he told her the tale of his vanishing million. When the story was done Nellie poked the table-cloth with the tines of her fork and was silent for about a minute. Then:

"What are you going to do, Elmer?"

"Anything at all that I can find to do, Nellie."

"But you're the mayor of Pilarcitos now—you're a trustee of the Union High School. Are you going to resign and leave Pilarcitos?"

"Not if I can make a decent living here. To resign and leave now would be equivalent to running away."

"But you'll be laughed to death, Elmer. Oh, you haven't any idea how cruelly you'll be twitted by the townspeople!"

"Indeed I have. But I'll survive it."

"It'll hurt terribly. I wouldn't blame you for leaving the town."

"I know. But I've stood some hurts in my day and I can stand more."

Nellie looked up at him with love unutterable in her brown eyes. "I adore you," she whispered.

Her simple, heart-felt declaration brought a mist to his eyes. "Please don't say it, Nellie," he pleaded. "I love you more than I'll ever love any woman again, but—you understand, don't you, darling? I can't expect you to marry a pauper. I'll probably be a fat, middle-aged man before I'll have enough money to support you decently and—oh, please understand, Nellie! I want you so, but I'll not be selfish enough to ask you to wait."

"I understand thoroughly, dear. I do not expect you to ask me to wait and as a matter of fact I would not consent to wait. When I marry you I want some of the sweetness of life, not the sacrifice and the drudgery of never-ending poverty. I have my place in the bank and I—take me out of here, Elmer Clarke. I'm going to cry."

Elmer hurriedly paid his bill and they left the road-house. Five miles down the road they came to the first arc-light on the outskirts of Pilarcitos. Nellie laid her soft little hand on Elmer's arm.

"Pull up under that arc-light," she commanded, and Elmer obeyed. From her bag Nellie drew a sheaf of typewritten papers and handed them to Elmer. "Read!" she commanded fiercely.

"What is it, Nellie?"

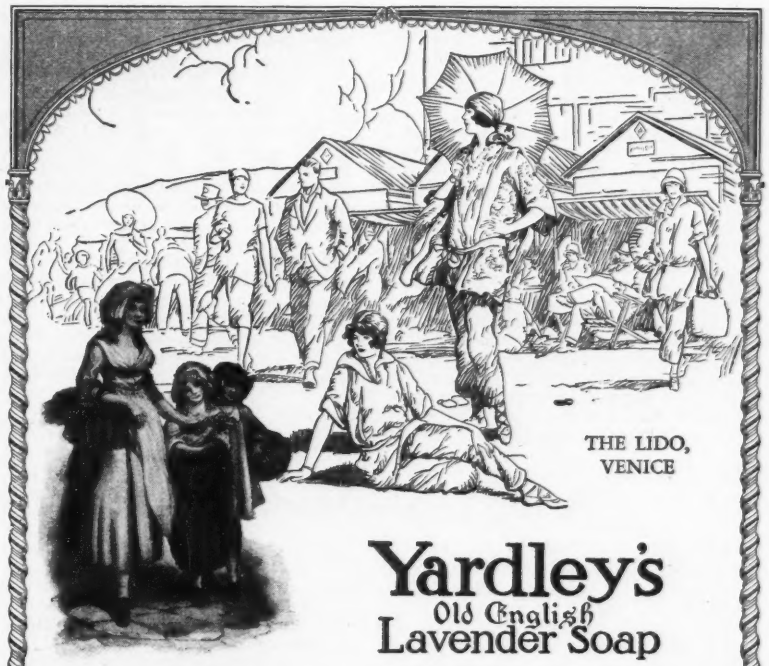
"It's the final accounting of your Uncle Hiram's estate submitted to the court by the executor, Absolom McPeake. You didn't take time to read it when he submitted a copy to you, so he sent it on to me to show you."

"How do you—why—I didn't know he knew you——"

"Read it, booby!" Nellie cried. "You're so deliberate you drive me crazy. Read it."

So Elmer read it—and when he had done so he was aware that he was riding in a Bolles-Joyce automobile with the next of kin of Benedict Catheron, who had received from the estate of Hiram Butterworth the sum of $1,078,000 in full satisfaction of that certain mortgage, et cetera. His face was very long and solemn as he folded the document and returned it to her.

"I'm happy you happened to be Benedict Catheron's granddaughter, Nellie," he said quietly. "You deserve every cent of it. God bless you! I hope you'll conserve it and enjoy



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it and never know the pinch of poverty again as long as you live."

"I told you I wouldn't wait to marry you until you had become fat and middle-aged and accumulated a few thousand dollars, Elmer. I meant what I said. Oh, my dear, I knew it all the time!—knew how little you were going to have left after everything should have been paid—and when I discovered, through McPeake, that you would escape with two hundred and eighteen thousand dollars I had a great curiosity to see how you would stand losing that. So I told McPeake I wanted you to think—oh, please forgive me, darling, but old Bunker was bluffing you all the time! So Mr. McPeake fixed it with the bank to tell you that story and then he pretended to have a long conversation with the collector of internal revenue—and here's your two hundred and eighteen thousand dollars and some odd, Elmer—and oh, you're so brave and simple and unspoiled; and I love you so much more now that I know how truly fine you are—kiss me, booby, kiss me, I say! Take me in your arms and tell me you love me. I want to hear you say it—over and over again, darling—and say you forgive me. I've bought out old Anse Moody's controlling interest in the bank and you're president and nobody is going to laugh at you. Oh, darling, you ought to know I wouldn't let anybody do that!"

"Don't!" he pleaded. "You don't know anything about it. That Doris Gatewood will make a laughing-stock of me yet. She can't prove a thing, but she'll give me a lot of publicity just for spite."

"She'll not. I have a dictograph record of her conversation with you the night she and Colorado Charley called to blackmail you. Why, I'm the one who put them in jail so they could think it over quietly, and when they get out they'll leave the state on tickets furnished by me, or go to the penitentiary for conspiracy to blackmail you. I knew all about them long before you did."

"Then in heaven's name, why did you keep me in ignorance and let me suffer?" he asked.

Nellie laughed softly. "Oh, I had a silly idea you'd think ever so much more of me if I permitted you to have some experience of her!"

Elmer threw in his gears and the car glided down the highway. Presently he turned off into a lateral road and pulled up in the shadow of a line of eucalyptus trees. Very calmly he reached down, switched off the ignition and lights and then turned to Nellie.

"Now," he said soberly, "I'll kiss the most wonderful girl in all the world, and after that we're going to motor over to San José, get the county clerk out of bed, secure a license and get married. If I'm to stay in Pilarcitos and pool my fortune with yours, we might as well start now because—well, because—oh, Nellie darling, how can you love me so? What an ass I've been!"

Nellie's arms went around his neck. "Stop singing the national anthem of Siam!" she commanded. "You dear old booby!"

THE END

A Big Little Man *by Irvin S. Cobb* *(Continued from page 27)*

hearers half the night; refused the right when war did come to go to the front as a volunteer in the ranks; finally joining a regiment of infantry and as a private and a corporal serving with conspicuous zeal and gallantry; disabled by a burst of gun-fire which inflicted literally a hundred wounds in his body and left him scarred from scalp to toes; while still an invalid, directing the back-fire against communism and the Reds, now scolding a weak and inefficient royal dynasty, now blasting a peace faction; finally, in the darkest hour that modern Italy has ever known, organizing the scattered forces of decency against a rising tide of rampant, murdering, pillaging bolshevism that was financed from Petrograd and fostered by Lenin and Trotsky; next the captain of the Black Shirts; then speedily the unchallenged commander of the triumphant Fascisti and in that capacity guiding and heading the great peaceful uprising of a whole people which made him before his fortieth birthday the Premier of Italy and the sole director of his country's destinies, with power in his hands such as no man of his race in latter times ever enjoyed, with millions of almost idolatrous followers to applaud him and to flatter him and to fawn upon him—there briefly and baldly you have this crusader of the fifteenth century translated to the twentieth, this throwback to the ancient days, this most outstanding human being that the past two decades have produced.

Why wouldn't such a career, such an experience, be calculated to make a man of his antecedents intolerant, dictatorial, autocratic—yes, despotic? Fatted with the authority which from time immemorial has been the fittest food for tyrants, why should not Mussolini in the golden hour of his victory stalk forth with an imperious front and harsh eyes gleaming under the penthouse of a lowering brow to make lesser men tremble at his frown and, being suitably enthroned on the sites of the palaces of the old Cæsars, to play the heroic rôle befitting a new Cæsar? How might any mortal doing so much as he has done in the span of half an average lifetime, starting so far down and climbing so far up, hope to escape becoming an egomaniac? How avoid the Napoleonic complex?

It was thus and so that I, never having seen the patient, diagnosed the assumed pathology of his case. Then just two days before I sat down to write this article I went by appointment from Florence to Rome to be received in private audience by Mussolini, and there and then it was that I revised all my previous estimates of his personality, his mentality, his physical contours and his spiritual potentialities.

According to my instructions I called prompt on a given hour at the old Chigi Palace which today, rather than the Quirinal where the King lives, is the real seat of government in Italy. About the detail of my admission there was infinitely less of formality than there would have been were I calling on some petty prince. To the entire transaction there was a fine democratic flavor most appealing to any ordinary American.

Past the doorway on the ground floor two or three gendarmes chatted with a functionary in civilian garb under an archway opening behind them upon an enclosed court where several automobiles were parked. The ununiformed man stepped forward inquiringly, throwing up his right hand palm outward in the historic greeting of the Roman soldier which the Fascisti have revived. Having no Italian, I explained my presence by showing him a telegram sent to my Florence address by one of the Premier's aides. He read it, smiled, bowed, waved me up a broad stairway on the right. At the level of the second floor I met a second man—an usher, to judge by his dress and manner—who escorted me through divers corridors to a reception hall where several silent gentlemen having the air about them of being experts either in diplomacy or statecraft were seated in resigned but expectant attitudes. Being convoyed past these patient persons, I was turned over to a second usher. I crossed a sort of wide hall to a small inner chamber where my guide, after pointing to a closed door, did a mysterious vanishing act.

I walked through the doorway rather in the expectation of entering an anteroom or outer office. Instead I found myself standing on the threshold of a rather sparsely decorated and empty-looking room, a hall really of large dimensions. It must have been seventy feet square. Diagonally opposite, just under a corner front window, was a huge flat-topped desk placed at angles to the walls, and seated behind that desk looking intently my way was one man—the only occupant of the place except myself. As I stepped in he got briskly upon his feet, giving the ancient salute as he did so—a thing which I had the wit to return—and then when briskly he rounded the desk and came towards me I saw that it was Mussolini.

I saw other things in the brief space of time while we were advancing towards a meeting. I saw—and this with a shock of surprise—that he was a small man, indeed almost a little man as we in America measure adult masculinity. I saw that he moved with a certain suave feline quickness and gracefulness which, while plainly unaffected and natural to him, might on the part of some matinée idol have been the proud result of twenty seasons of study and rehearsal. In that flash I thought of John Drew as Drew looked twenty years ago; of Leo Ditrichstein ten years ago. The suggestion of a leading man in a polite play was enhanced by his costume, which among other items included a close-fitting, tightly buttoned frock coat, a pair of beautifully creased trousers, dark spats, highly polished shoes, and at the sleeve ends two extraordinarily large and glossy white linen cuffs. But there was no trace of the actor's pose in his greeting.

He gave my hand a hard, swift clasp, saying simply that he was glad to meet me. He spoke good English in the phonetically exact but unaccented terms of one who has learned our tongue from text-books rather than from contact with members of English-speaking races.

"You speak Italian?—No!" Framing the answer even as I shook my head. "French, then, perhaps?"

I told him that following previous attempts various kindly but shocked Frenchmen had assured me on their regretful word of honor that I did not speak French.

"Very well, then," he said, "we will speak together in English. But you must speak quite slowly—not too fast—otherwise I shall not understand. Please will you sit down and be yourself comfortable?"

While he led the way to where two stiff, tall chairs faced each other in front of his desk, I had further fleeting opportunity for appraising the man. I noted how well-formed and small and supple his hands were—the sensitive hands, you would say, of a musician or a painter, not the hands of one who once upon a time had earned his bread by manual labor; and I deduced for myself a possible reason for those exceedingly big cuffs on his wrists. I figured it as a little touch of pardonable personal vanity—the cuffs made the beautiful hands look smaller still. His skin had a greenish underlay to it—the skin of a man who works too hard and thinks too much and perhaps has some chronic gastric ailment. It was not a healthy color; I imagine a doctor might call it an unhealthy lack of color. But for offset to this his waist was the trim, drawn-in waist of an athlete, his chest was deep and his shoulders flared back, his legs and arms moved with vigor and strength, his gestures—of which for an Italian he used strangely few—were the emphatic, sharp gestures of a man unwearied and one who physically is tremendously, alertly alive.

Later I was to hear how and why it was that Mussolini can do more work and keep longer hours than any man under him and yet remain fit. The answer seems to be that he has incredible gifts for absorption and concentration coupled with an ability to make instantaneous decisions, plus the added essential facts that he eats little and takes much strenuous exercise—motoring, horseback riding, fencing—at every opportunity, and for his hours of private relaxation plays rather well on the violin.

We sat down, our knees almost touching, and the sun of late afternoon coming over his shoulder from behind him brought out his face in strong relief. With another profound jolt of

astonishment, I discovered that his forehead did not beetle or bulge. It was a fine, straight, high frontal, somewhat bald and a little narrowed at the temples—the head of a philosopher and a student. Only at the back did his skull betray the bump of a stubborn and persistent and unrelentful fighter. His mouth was wide and gracious and, or I am wrong, very kindly with flexible lips—the lips of an orator and yet with a shy, sly, humorous, satiric droop at the corners.

It was the eye, though, that indexed the mentality within. It was keen enough—God knows it was a keen, appraising, judgmatical eye!—but it was neither bleak nor cold nor harsh nor ruthless. It was a big brown eye with sadness in it—indeed, almost with melancholy in it, and with sympathy and charity in it too, or I miss my guess. I wonder whether there is not in Mussolini's eye a trace at least of the same expression that was in Lincoln's—compassion for human weaknesses but not for human meannesses, and along with this, strength and understanding and a rapt determination for putting through the job in hand.

Finally before I pass on to other things I want to say that if Mussolini were not wholly Italian he might pass in any crowd for a Semite. I have wondered why so many Italians should look so very much like Jews—especially why so many of the priests and nuns I see here should look like Jews. And to me Mussolini, one hundred percent Latin though he be, had a pronouncedly Semitic cast and mold to his countenance. Or perhaps that was only my fancy and my delusion.

"You wrote me that your editor in America wanted you to get of me an impression?" he said.

"Yes, sir," I answered him, "that is correct."

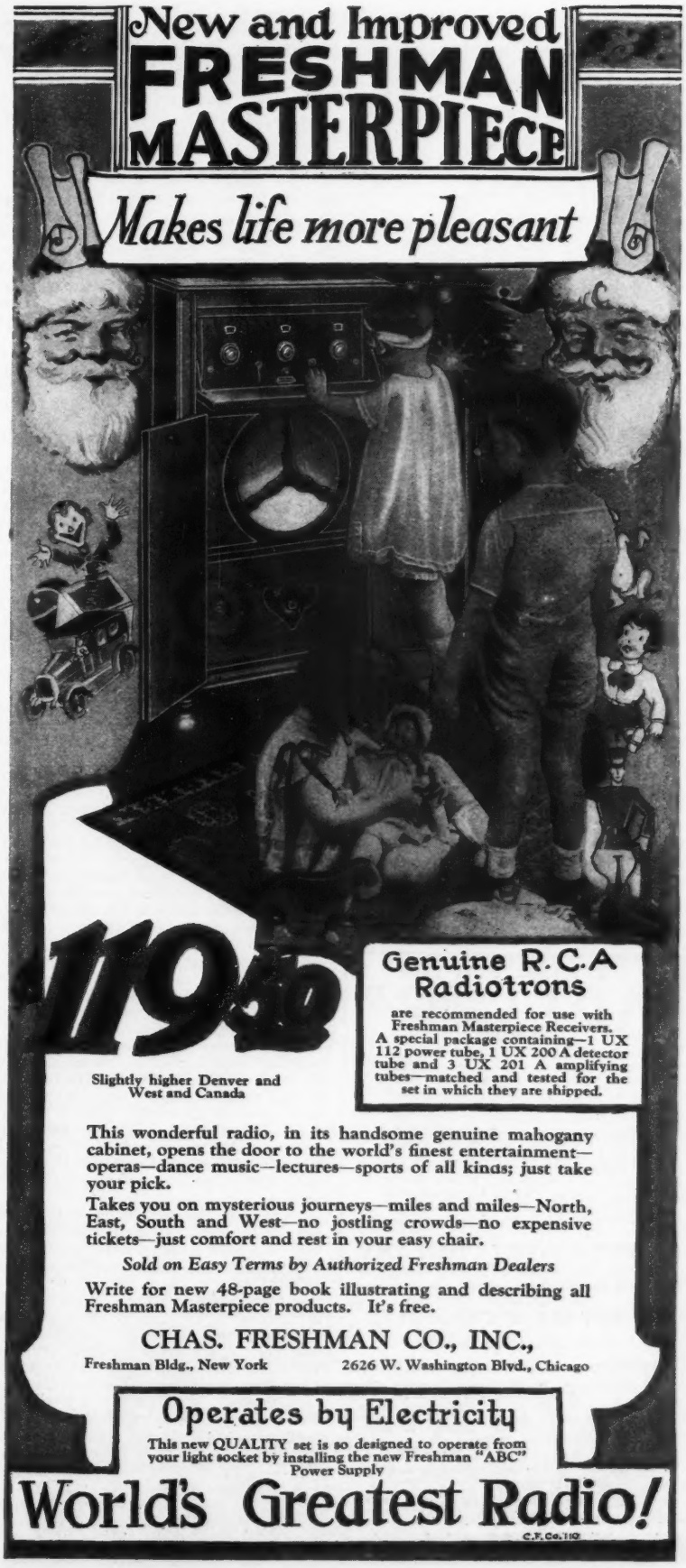
"Good," he snapped. "Not an interview—only an impression. Then we freely may speak—as one journalist to another. I will ask you some questions if you do not mind."

He asked them. He put them plump and straight like a practised marksman throwing bullets into the bull's-eye of an easy target. He wanted to know my opinion about labor conditions in America, about certain living individuals—he named two of them—about the approximate strength and the potential dangers, if any, of the Bolshevik movement in America, about internal economic conditions with us, about certain existing policies of our present national administration. I thought I detected an undercurrent of admiration for some American institutions in his tone. It was a little later that he came to open praise for us.

He illustrated his questions as he accepted my responses—with deft, graphic gestures. I do not know what professional tricks of the silver-tongue and the rabble-rouser Mussolini may have for his public appearances or for his prepared exhortations. I never saw Mussolini in action before an audience so I cannot say how he behaves then or what bombastic psychology he may adopt, what strutting and ranting rôles he may play to arouse his friends or frighten his enemies. I can only say that in private he is utterly free from all signs of deliberate affectation, all efforts to gain an effect by a quirk of voice or mannerism. I do not mean by this to imply that he is not dramatic.

I never yet saw a good Italian who lacked for the instinctive dramatic quality, but I do mean to say that never once during our dialog did he do anything or say anything that smacked of the theatrical. Earnestness and simplicity and a tremendous interest—these he had in abundance. But about him I detected nothing that was artificial or false or forced even.

Having to the best of my poor knowledge satisfied his curiosity regarding those enumerated manifestations of the American temperament, I made so bold as to try to tell him of the popular estimation in which he is held on our side of the Atlantic Ocean. He listened intently and gave a quite flashing smile of frank pleasure when I said that a great many



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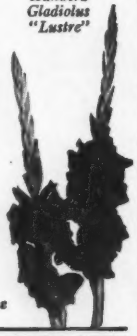
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people among us believed that by reason of his drastic treatment of communism in Italy he had saved the English-speaking peoples from the menace of a growing spirit of anarchy. I went on:

"Do you know, your Excellency, what a great many Americans call you? They call you the Italian Roosevelt."

By this he obviously was gratified.

"For that," he said, "I am very, very glad and very proud. Roosevelt I very greatly admired." He clenched his fists. "Roosevelt had strength—he had the will to do what he thought should be done. He had greatness. I have—I have——"

Here for the first time he hesitated and flung a swift ripple of Italian out sidewise. There was a murmur of assent almost at his elbow and now I was aware that somehow a secretary had materialized out of space.

"His Excellency wishes to state that he has read your late President Roosevelt's writings—all of them," explained the translator. "They were among the very first books he read after he had learned the English."

Mussolini waved the third man to silence and bent toward me:

"What do you do in Italy?" he demanded.

"I visit here—or rather in Florence," I said. "My son-in-law and my daughter are living in Italy for the time being. My first grandchild will be born on Italian soil. The birth is expected any day now. That is largely why I am here—I and my wife."

His face lighted; his eyes glowed.

"Good—I am glad for that. My congratulations are for you. My felicitations and my best wishes are for your daughter and her husband. Please tell them so from me."

I asked him to autograph a photograph for my daughter.

"Most gladly," he said. And the secretary on noiseless feet sped away to get a photograph.

"Then you never were in Italy before?" asked Mussolini.

"Oh, yes," I said. "Thirteen years ago—in 1913 it was—I spent a month here."

"Thirteen years, eh? And do you find Italy changed?"

"Most greatly changed and for the better."

"Ah!" His tone was eager. "Tell me, how?"

"Well, sir," I said, "then Italy was filled with beggars—everywhere there were beggars. And—pardon me for saying it, but you have asked—there was much petty thievery. It was dangerous to send valuables by mail, or so I was warned. And I was told that frequently express packages and travelers' luggage were rifled in transit. And—pardon me again—the streets and the railroad trains were dirty and the people, many of them, were disorderly."

While I was making this indictment I was watching with fascination his hands. Why, the man was an unconscious pantomimist. When I spoke of beggars he cupped his right hand, then thrummed the tips of the bent fingers against the ball of the thumb in the gesture which the world over stands for beggary. When I spoke of thieves he made the swift dipping gesture of picking a pocket. I went on:

"Now, sir, the beggars have vanished—nearly all of them. The petty thieves are gone too. One hears no complaint of them. And I know that the mails are safe. The people are orderly, the towns have been cleaned up, the trains are in perfect order. Everywhere there is manifest a spirit of progress, of moral, physical improvement. To sum up, sir, thirteen years ago I would have said that Italy was a country which lived for its todays. Now I would say it is a land which lives also for its tomorrows—for its future, which I think must be a very great and splendid future."

His clenched right fist came down with a hearty bang on the table. He shot a sidewise glance—a gleam of satisfaction—at his secretary, who had returned.

"You are right!" he exclaimed. "I am glad you have observed these things. I am glad you have told me of them. Please, through the magazine you serve, tell it also to the people of America that they may understand what this new Italy is like. Tell them of Our Italy." He capitalized those last two words; he made them stand out in big bold letters.

"This much now I will say to you of Italy," he continued. "Work and discipline—that is what we must have. That is what I strive for. Work—we already do that. Discipline we are learning."

"A good formula for America, too," I said. "As a people we are reasonably industrious but I am afraid we're not as well disciplined as we might be."

"You tell me so?" he queried, lifting his head from where he was inscribing the photograph. "America is so great—has she not all things needful for true greatness?"

"I'm not sure but we too need discipline."

"Well, Italy shall have it! More and more she shall have it!"

"Your Excellency," I said, "I've told you what I think of the Italy of 1926 as contrasted with the Italy of before the war. I should like to tell you what I think of you as I see you reflected in these thousands of things that go on about you—all of them your handicraft."

"I am listening."

"Aside from all else, and eliminating your achievements as a leader and a builder, I regard you as the greatest experimentalist in government that the modern world has known."

"Experimentalist?" The word seemed to puzzle him. His eyebrows came down. Then on the instant I read or thought I read the thought that was in his mind. I divined that his mind perhaps had swung speculatively towards that land whose present doctrines he so heartily despises—the Russia of the Reds.

"Lenin and Trotsky—they were experimentalists too," I hastened to amend, "but of a different sort. They were specialists in disorder; experts at destruction. You, if I may say so, are a specialist in organization, in construction, in legislative healthfulness. They brought firebrands. You bring remedies and a tonic. They were mad. You are audacious—but sane."

He bowed his appreciation of the compliment. His acknowledgment of it was as sincere as my uttering of it had been genuine and sincere.

"One thing more, please," I added. "If I may, I should like to quote your answer to my next question. Today it is conceded everywhere that Italy rests upon your shoulders. You bear the burden of her. You are responsible for her regeneration during these last six years and you have charged yourself with the task of carrying her onward to a yet finer and nobler destiny. But suppose you die? Suppose you were removed from this world tonight? What of Italy?"

His voice—which is a splendid, flexible, fluid instrument—blared at me like a trumpet.

"My answer you may quote," he proclaimed with a tremendous, overpowering confidence. "All is prepared. All is organized. If I live, Italy reborn goes on. If I die, she still goes on. The men to take my place have been trained—they are ready. Italy goes on and on to the heights!"

He insisted on accompanying me to the door. At the door he shook my hand twice.

"Good-by, Signor Cobb," he said. "Do not forget to tell the people of America what Italy is! For that you shall have my very grateful thanks always."

On that I came away. Hereafter I shall think backward of this man Mussolini not as a lion or as a bull or as an eagle, to all of which he has been likened. I shall think of him as one of the most human human beings I ever saw—and one of the very greatest.

It is a wonderful thing for one man to have saved a nation from ruin. It is still more wonderful to think that, having saved it and having been entrusted solely and entirely with its up-keeping and its well-being, such a man still retains his balance and his sanity, his humanity and his humility.

If you ask me, I'm for Benito Mussolini!

The Old Countess

(*Continued from page 87*)

and look at her," thought Graham. But another thought inhibited an impulse that had almost accomplished itself. How intolerable, for him and for Mademoiselle Ludérac, how destructive of his position at the *manoir*, if the old lady's eyes should open and find him so engaged. No; he could not risk it.

His frame was taut with the strain of his repression, and a curious contraction tightened the muscles of the arm that held his palette; but he did not dare to turn. Behind him Mademoiselle Ludérac neither spoke nor moved. Médor slept, and Madame de Lamouderie slept; the clock ticked; loudly; softly; and it seemed suddenly to Graham that the silence was filled by a complicity of control. Did not she also wish him to look at her?

Madame de Lamouderie opened her eyes. She gazed at Graham, for a moment, in astonishment; then, swiftly, over at Mademoiselle Ludérac. Her expression took on a sudden calm.

"Have I slept?" she inquired.

"For at least five minutes," said Graham.

"It seems an hour to me. I am refreshed. And you, what have you done?"

"I've stared at you, and at my picture. Mademoiselle Ludérac, I suppose," and, deliberately, Graham turned in his chair and looked at her, "has stared at the rain."

"Yes," said Mademoiselle Ludérac, and now, as her dark eyes rested upon him, he attempted to turn his desire at its very source, to refrain from the quest and concentrate his faculty in a cold, devouring intentness, so that her features should at last be stamped ineffaceably upon his brain.

For one sliding instant he saw her; saw the long oval of her face; the clear, wide spaces in which her eyes were set, the rosy mauve that shaped her lips; but it was only for an instant. The vision slipped from him; the sharp flame burned him; he saw her face no longer, but only felt a presence, pale, piteous, darkly preoccupied, yet still resisting; a presence that in this new guise had come nearer than ever before; so near that when her eyes removed themselves from his—and with a self-command at which he marveled—it was as if from an actual contact.

"*Bien.* I shall not again transgress."

He had almost forgotten Madame de Lamouderie, and from the blandness of her tone he could measure the degree of Mademoiselle Ludérac's self-command. She had sustained the old lady's scrutiny through a moment that would not have left his pulses pounding as they were had it not brought to her, also, some revelation. She feared him; she greatly feared him. To Madame de Lamouderie she had showed only calm; but to him she had betrayed her fear.

"I had pleasant dreams; very pleasant," the old lady went on, as he took up his palette. "I was walking in the garden of my childhood and Médor was by my side. I wore a broad straw hat tied with blue ribbons and Médor carried in his mouth a basket of strawberries. Continue, therefore, your tragic portrait. I am all at your service."

Jill had spent the morning at the Ecu d'Or, writing letters. They had taken a small *salon au premier*, sparsely furnished with a carved center table, four small red velvet chairs, a red velvet sofa and three bronzes on the mantelpiece; two vases encrusted with flowers and between them a galloping horse with a clock set in its chest and on its back a rider clothed in a turbulent scarf.

The day was so cold and so dreary that Jill had had a fire lighted and it was before the fire that Graham found her, stretched on a sofa, a cigaret between her lips.

"Well?" she said.

Graham came and stood at the head of the sofa. She could not see him as he stood there above her.



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"What kind of a time did you have?" she asked.

"The old lady was very cross with me," said Graham after a moment.

"Of course she was," said Jill.

"But I enjoyed her," said Graham. "She's such a clever old scoundrel."

"Of course she is. Not such a scoundrel, either. She's merely very human. And I'm sorry for her," said Jill. "It must be so bewildering to see you transfer your attention to someone else; just when she was having the time of her life with you. Did Marthe Ludérac read?"

"Naturally. The old lady wouldn't have been cross if she hadn't read."

"But I somehow thought she'd have prevented it; circumvented you by some trick or plan."

"She'd have liked to, of course; only she was afraid of losing me altogether if she did," Graham analyzed the old lady's dilemma.

"Oh, it *is* too bad, you know. You're bound to her more than ever now; I hope you realize that; and to let her see she's not to lose you."

"Ah, well, that will still depend on her; on her behavior," laughed Graham, enjoying, apparently, the gross complacency of his own attitude. But Jill felt something else under the enjoyment. He still stood above her.

"Did you get a talk with Marthe?" she now inquired.

"A talk? How should I?"

"Well, I suppose you couldn't; since the old lady was there. And after all," said Jill, "you didn't expect to talk to her, did you? All you expected was to look at her."

"Well, I didn't look at her, either. She sat behind me. How long to lunch?"

"Only fifteen minutes. What an awful day." Jill had glanced at her wrist-watch and then at the windows.

"I shall have another walk this afternoon, all the same. I'm feeling a little liverish."

"I don't think I'll go out. I'm feeling a little as if I'd caught a cold."

"I don't wonder." Graham now walked over to the window and looked out.

Jill, in the silence that followed, was asking herself whether she was really feeling frightened. Dick and she were together—together. Nothing was hidden between them. Why this strange breathlessness? Was it Dick who was frightened? She steadied her nerves. It was like drawing at a rein.

Suddenly Graham came back, and sat down beside her and put his head on her shoulder. Jill's heart stood still.

"What would you feel about clearing out of all this, Jill?" he said.

"All this?"

"Yes. Buissac."

"Are you tired of Buissac?"

"Yes. I think I am. Tired of the old woman. And tired of the young one. They get on my nerves."

It was Dick's superstition, then. Only that. They must not yield to superstition. Though a real fear it might be well to yield to. "But the portrait?" said Jill.

"I'll chuck it."

"It seems so cruel to chuck her."

"I don't mind being cruel."

"And all those pictures you've started. Don't you mind leaving them?"

"Yes, I mind; in a way; but what do you feel about it all?" Dick muttered.

It was difficult to know what she felt, with Dick's dear head pressed against her neck, his arm holding her across her breast. But Dick was not caressing her. He was taking refuge with her. And was she, too, afraid of Buissac now? She hated being afraid. She hated to yield to fear.

"What I feel is what you feel," she said slowly, trying to think. "I mean—it's all for you, of course, the places we stay at. If you want to go, so do I. What is there to keep us, if you really want to go?"

But as she spoke she knew that there was something that did keep her. Was it only her superstition, as against Dick's? Her white magic against his black mood? Marthe Ludérac kept her. She and Marthe Ludérac had something to do for each other. Was that only superstition? But it seemed like running away, it seemed like cowardice, to turn one's back not only on Marthe Ludérac's celestial secret, but on her tragedy.

Dick kept his face pressed into her shoulder. He was waiting for an answer.

"Have your walk first," she found. "Lunch will make a difference, too, perhaps. Don't forget that it's nothing new, Dick. You wanted to run away the other day, before——" She had been going to say "before you had seen Marthe Ludérac," but she changed it to —"before you'd begun the portrait. If you run away now, I mean, it might become a habit!" and Jill tried to make her voice very light as she found this admonition. "And it would be such an inconvenient habit. Think it over by yourself first, Dick. And then, if you really want to go, we will go."

Graham felt that she was saying: "Steady, old boy; steady."

When, after lunch, Graham had gone out into the rain Jill lay down again on the sofa. She had a headache. A wood-fire on a wet spring day was a pleasant thing to look at and she lay and looked at it.

Suddenly the door opened and Amélie's head, in uncouth fashion, appeared round it.

"*Mademoiselle Ludérac demande à voir Madame.*"

Jill sat up. An electric shock seemed to pass through her; a mingling of panic and delight.

"Tell her to come up."

Jill rose to her feet. This was the solution, then. She could not de ide. Dick could not decide. Marthe Ludérac would decide for them whether they were to stay on in Buissac. "But what nonsense," said Jill to herself. "I shall soon become as dotty as poor Dick."

She stood looking towards the door that Amélie had left ajar and in a moment it was pushed softly open and Marthe Ludérac stood before her. She wore the black raincoat in which Jill had first seen her and a small black hat which made her face look strangely young. Her expression, too, was young. Everybody was frightened today. Marthe Ludérac was frightened.

"Oh, how wet you are!" Jill started forward after the involuntary pause in which they had contemplated each other. "You are dripping wet! Let me take this."

Mademoiselle Ludérac, in an unresisting silence, submitted to her help. "Sit down here, beside me," said Jill; but, looking unseeingly around her, Marthe Ludérac took a chair at the table and Jill sank down again on the sofa opposite her.

"I wished to see you alone. I must speak with you," said Mademoiselle Ludérac in a fixed, firm manner. "I saw that your husband was gone. Shall we be unin:errupted?"

"Yes, he's gone. He'll be gone for a long time. What is it? Has anything happened to trouble you?" asked Jill and her voice trembled a little.

"No, nothing has happened. Nothing new has happened to trouble me. It is you who trouble me," said Mademoiselle Ludérac, putting her hands, clasped together, on the table before her and fixing her eyes upon them. "There is something you should know. I did not think I should have to speak of it. Not to another soul have I ever spoken of my life. But last night it came to me that you must know; for I cannot defend myself against you." She checked herself. Her voice, too, was trembling. For a moment she sat silent, while Jill, motionless, gazed at her. Then she said, and her voice was firm again: "It is this. My mother was a murderess."

Jill, transfixed, gazed upon her.

"She killed my father," said Mademoiselle Ludérac, not raising her eyes from her knotted hands. "It was what is called a *crime passionel*. He loved another woman and she killed him; and tried to kill herself."

Jill sat and gazed upon the black, resolute figure; the pale, fixed face. As the meaning of the knife-like words came fully to her understanding she saw that Mademoiselle Ludérac had come to cut herself away; to set herself apart again. And it was true that the sense of awe that descended upon Jill had in it an abyss-like element; as though the gulf of suffering revealed in the words did indeed divide them.

"Madame de Lamouderie told me that your mother was mad," she said.

"I asked her what she had told you. It was kind of her to say no more; very kind," said Mademoiselle Ludérac.

"She was so dreadfully sorry; of course. But I wish she could have told me everything. It would have spared you this," said Jill. "When you asked her, she could have told you that I knew. Then you need never have spoken about it, unless you felt you wanted to."

At this Mademoiselle Ludérac sat silent; looking fixedly at her hands. She sat for some moments; then she rose. "That is all. I will go now. You have been kind to me. You will believe in my gratitude."

Jill also rose and confronted her. "But what do you think you have done? Do you think that I shall care for you the less because your mother killed your father?"

Across the table, arrested, with the glance, almost, of a trapped creature, Mademoiselle Ludérac met her eyes. It was what she had thought; or hoped—or feared; for she seemed trapped rather than released. And turning her eyes away she murmured, darkly: "You must not try to be my friend, I cannot have a friend. It is not a happy thing for you that you should have come to Buissac."

"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." It floated through Jill's mind; and with it Dick's face just now. It had not been a happy thing for Dick. Dick's intuition had been right. There was a dark tower; and Mademoiselle Ludérac had been shut into it since childhood. All the more reason to break down the doors; and let her out.

"But you see, I am your friend," she said, and tears came to her eyes. "You can't get rid of me. You don't know what a friend is. You've lived so long shut up by yourself in the dark that you're afraid of the daylight. A friend doesn't love you the less because you've been unhappy. They love you the more. You may not care about me, but I shall care for you always."

It might have been because she saw her tears and they weakened her too much, or it might have been with an overwhelming sense of woe, but Mademoiselle Ludérac sank down on her chair beside the table and leaned her face upon her hands. She said nothing. She made no sound. Jill did not think that she was weeping. Perhaps she was thinking; thinking intently behind this last rampart. Jill came and sat down beside her.

"Let me tell you. It's so strange. I feel as if we were meant to meet, long ago. I've thought and thought about you and your mother. You've both been real to me since I saw her grave, last autumn, with your roses on it. When Madame de Lamouderie told me about you, how she had first met you both in the woods, and how you led your mother—and loved her—it seemed to break my heart. I saw her portrait last night and it brought you both still nearer. It's just as if I'd known that little girl. You can't keep me away. You must let me share it with you. Nobody, since she's gone, has ever cared for you as I do."

Marthe Ludérac was weeping. No sob shook her. They were not passionate tears; but Jill saw them, falling, falling, slowly, between her hands; and kneeling down beside her, she put her arms around her and drew her head upon her shoulder and murmured: "Oh—my dear, dear Marthe!"

Marthe Ludérac lay on her shoulder and wept. "Thank heaven for this," Jill was thinking. "Thank heaven we did not leave Buissac before this happened. She can never

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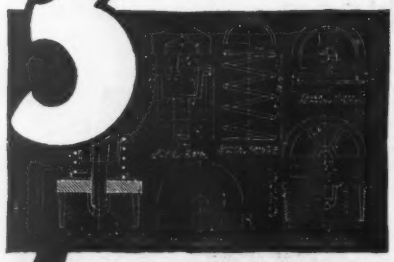
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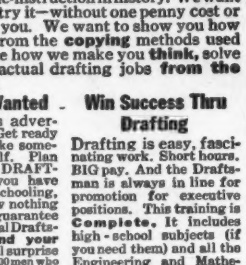
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be so lonely again, now. Even if I have to leave her, she will know that I am there, and that I know, and love her." And a beautiful sense of happiness, deeper, more beautiful, perhaps, than any she had ever known, filled Jill's heart.

"No, there is no one like you," she heard Marthe Ludérac say at last.

"Tell me about it. Don't you want to? Wouldn't it help? It's so dreadful to keep things to oneself, always."

A long time seemed to have passed, and as Jill questioned her thus, so gently, Marthe Ludérac took her hand and pressed it for a moment against her wet cheek, repeating: "There is no one like you."

"Will you tell me?" said Jill. She was sitting beside her now and she kept her hand in hers. "Was she really mad? Or was that only what people thought?"

"No; she was not mad." Helplessly, before Jill's tenderness, Marthe Ludérac suffered herself to be led forth, and her look, almost of astonishment, was indeed the look of one who can hardly believe in daylight. "Sometimes the injury to her head gave her such pain that she became unconscious—or fell into a frenzy; but she was not really mad. That people thought her so was well for us; it gave us shelter."

"It must have been so lonely; so horribly lonely," Jill murmured. "Had you no one? No one at all? Were there no relations to care what became of her and you?"

"No one at all."

"And you were so poor," Jill mused on her. "How did you manage for all those years? You could not work then."

"My mother had her little fortune; it took it almost all to pay the expenses of her defense; but there was a little left."

"You have that now?"

"No; I only now have what I make. The war swept what we had away."

Jill wondered how she should venture on a nearer question. It would help Marthe Ludérac to tell; of that she was sure; but how to frame a further question was difficult. Of the tragic central figure they had only spoken indirectly. But Marthe Ludérac herself continued to speak.

"It was a *crime passionel,*" she went on, after the pause which had followed her last words. "There were extenuating circumstances. That was why she was set at liberty. And to see her, half dying, appear before them, with her bandaged head. That, too, softened their hearts."

"You were there?"

"I was a witness."

"But you were so young——"

"I saw it all," said Marthe Ludérac, "and though I was so young, I had, from the beginning, understood it all."

Jill gazed at her, silent and wondering.

"My mother was always unhappy. She always loved him, and he never loved her as much. There was not a time when I did not understand that he was being kind to her and that she was longing for more than he could give her."

"Oh, wasn't it all your dreadful way of getting married?" Jill murmured. "Wasn't it a *mariage de convenance?* People don't expect love in marriage, so they have to find it somewhere else. I wonder tragedies don't happen oftener."

Marthe Ludérac paused to consider this. "Do they indeed happen more often with us than with the people who marry for love? I do not know." She considered and she put it away. She did not know. "It is true that their marriage was arranged for them; by their mothers, who had been friends at school. But it had seemed a happy arrangement. My father, though he had no personal fortune, was a brilliant young scientist; his position was excellent; he was steady, devoted, serious. Had my mother been less exacting, less romantic, and had the other woman not come into their lives, they might have been happy. But it was not like that. My mother was in love with him and she longed for the love that he gave, at once, helplessly, to the other woman. I was only twelve when she came. But I knew what was happening."

"Who was she? Do you remember her? Is she still alive?"

"Do I remember her! I can see her now, as plainly as I see you, with her smiling face, and little fur cap and collar, up there on that great terrace you spoke of; above the cathedral; in Angoulême. It was so I first saw her; on a winter day; when I was walking with my father. Yes. She is still alive. Is it not strange? when they have been dead for so long. But she was not to blame," said Marthe Ludérac. "She was helpless, too."

"But she was to blame!" said Jill indignantly. "She took another woman's husband away from her."

Again Marthe Ludérac paused and considered. "She did not take him. He took her. He was full of charm and power. She was very young. Far younger than he and my mother; the young wife married from her convent, to an old man; our neighbor; a friend of my father's father. How can one blame her? I saw how she struggled and resisted. For a long year her resistance lasted, and she became so pale and sad. He struggled too. By nature he was a loyal man. I saw it all."

"And your mother—did she see?"

"At first, nothing. It was her happiest year. Can you understand that? He was more loving to her through all that year than he had ever been. She was his refuge. I understood it well. It was because he was so full of fear—and of pity—that he clung to her with his passionate, agonized tenderness."

Something shot into Jill's heart at that; not a thought; not even a recollection. It was only a trail of sharpness; a flickering light on the horizon; a far, shrill cry. Marthe Ludérac spoke on and held her mind.

"I was so young; but I knew when the struggle ceased. Not as a woman would know; but the essential; that my father was unfaithful; that they were lovers. My fear became terror. I must have understood, instinctively, the dark forces in my mother's nature, and to what extremes they might carry her. I loved my father dearly; perhaps I loved him more than I loved her; but it was for her sake that I helped him to hide from her; helped him to blind her still; a childish, half-conscious complicity. I was always there; between them; keeping them together; distracting my mother's attention when he failed her. But if she did not know, it was because she would not let herself know. Then, at last, the end came."

Marthe Ludérac raised her hands and held them before her face and looked at them for a moment. Then she bowed her forehead upon them. "My father's unhappy mistress became *enceinte.* It was strange; I was with them all. I met her once, in the garden of the house. Their apartment was in the same house as ours. She was walking under the trees; in a pink dress. So changed. I was full of grief for her. She must have seen it in my face, for she took me by the hand and we went up and down together, never saying a word.

"It could not have been long after that that she came to see my father. She was in despair. I was in the room opposite and saw Joseph let her into my father's study. I knew that she should not have come; that there was danger. I stood there and looked at the closed door and then I saw my mother before me. She did not ask me a question. She stopped there and looked at me and my face must have told her. She went into the study and shut the door. She must have found them in each other's arms. There was not time for them to have spoken one word with her. My father's case of pistols lay on the bookcase, next the door, under her hand. She took the weapon—so it must have been—and fired at my father and turned the second bullet against herself. All over the house the shots were heard. Then I went in and saw them."

"Oh no—oh no!" Jill muttered. She too hid her face.

"My father lay there, dead," said Marthe Ludérac. "His mistress knelt beside him. She wore the pink dress and when she staggered up all the front was covered with his blood. My mother was lying in a chair near the door. She was moaning and half her face seemed shot away. That was how I found them."

"What did you do?" Jill whispered.

"I held my mother. I called. There was no need to call. Everybody was running to us. Everybody had heard. The room at once, it seemed, was full of people. Joseph and his wife were there; and the old husband—crying—crying—and took his wife away. He was tender to her; he was a good old man. And the doctor; and the police. They carried my mother to her room. I went with them. They always let me stay with her. They felt that I would be calm, and that they could trust me. From the first, strength was given to me."

Jill sat silent. The sense of awe, of distance, crept over her again. Her young, jocund face had a strained, strange look.

"I distress you too much," said Marthe Ludérac, considering her gently. "And now you have heard all my story."

"No, no—not all. I want to hear it to the end," Jill said faintly. "I want to hear how you and she lived here, when you brought her back. I want to hear what you did for all those years. You were not quite alone? You had Joseph. I did not know that Joseph was your servant."

"Yes. He came from Buissac, with my mother, when she married. He has always been in my life, good Joseph. We could give them no money, but he and his wife, who lived then, followed us and took care of us. I do not know what would have become of us without them. All their little savings they spent in our service."

"I thought he was Madame de Lamouderie's servant. But go on, dear Marthe. Your mother taught you the harp, you told me. She was well enough to teach you?"

"Yes; she was often well enough for that. It was her great solace. And as I grew older I could be more of a companion for her. I read to her. We walked a great deal in the woods; on the mountains; down on the island; the island was a favorite walk of hers; that is one reason why I love it so. I was always with her. Day and night. She could not bear to be left alone for one moment. The terror was always lying in wait for her but, together, we could keep it at arm's length. At night we slept in the same bed and I held her in my arms till she could sleep. The terror came much nearer at night. It was difficult for her to sleep. She often wept and there was the frenzy to fear when she yielded to her grief. I used to sing to her; old songs—*'Sur le Pont d'Avignon'; 'Les Filles de la Rochelle'*—and she would at last fall asleep. Yes," Marthe Ludérac repeated, now with a strange, stern calm, "strength was given to me. We even had many happy hours together."

This, then, was the celestial, thought Jill. She felt herself bathed in its terrible beauty.

"I must go now," said Marthe Ludérac. For a long time they had sat side by side, silent, and pressing Jill's hand, with a deep sigh, she released it and rose.

"Yes. You must go," said Jill vaguely. "May I call you Marthe?"

"Will you?"

"I think of you as Marthe. And you must call me Jill."

"Jill," said Mademoiselle Ludérac gently. She pronounced the word with the soft French *g*. "Jill," she repeated. "My friend."

Jill nodded, smiling faintly. "That's it. You've got it at last. It seems a long time, doesn't it? Though it was only the other day we met."

"Yes. It seems a long time. I did not know then that there were people in the world like you," said Mademoiselle Ludérac.

"And what are we going to do?" said Jill. "That's what I want to ask you. What's



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going to become of the friends? How can I go away and leave you?"

"But"—Mademoiselle Ludérac, her eyes so deeply, so gentiy considering her, hesitated—"when your husband's work is finished, you will go? Is not that so?"

"Yes. And perhaps even before." Jill stood looking down. "Does it mean that we are to part?"

"I think it must mean that."

Jill brooded, and Mademoiselle Ludérac looked at her. Presently, timidly, she said—and Jill felt that she had been seeking consolation, for them both—"It is not something lost, Jill. It is something gained, is it not? I never thought to have what you have given me. But it is mine, now, and it will be with me to the end."

"Yes; but life is day after day," Jill muttered. "It's every day, over and over again, that one needs bread. You are so lonely. So terribly lonely."

"No; not so lonely," Mademoiselle spoke in quiet protest. "There is Madame de Lamouderie; there is Joseph. There are my dear animals. A poor woman lives in the hut below the *manoir*, our *femme de ménage*, and I am fond of her and her little boy. And there is my work in Bordeaux; full of interest. And my music; best of all. Mine is not an empty life."

"You may be able to bear it for yourself," said Jill, "but I can hardly bear it for you."

"But you must not make me think," said Mademoiselle Ludérac, taking her hand again and slightly shaking it as she recalled her earlier warning, "that it is an unhappy thing for you to have come to Buissac. If you go feeling so sorrowful, that would indeed be hard for me to bear. No, Jill, no; it is something gained. And our lives could not run in the same channel. Do not be sad."

"I'm afraid I am, though. Very sad," said Jill.

She held Mademoiselle Ludérac's hand and they moved towards the door. She was wondering whether she should ever see her again. What would Marthe Ludérac feel if she were to tell her that she and Dick might leave Buissac next morning? "But no," she said to herself. "Dick will be all right again when he comes in from his walk."

They had gone together to the door, and, pausing there, Mademoiselle Ludérac still seemed to defer the farewell. She glanced at Jill and her face altered. "There is one more thing I would speak of with you," she said, and Jill saw that she nerved herself.

"Yes? What is it, Marthe?"

"It is something I wish to ask." Standing there, her eyes on Jill's, her face had strangely resumed the look it had worn on first entering.

"But of course you may ask anything."

"It is this. Only a little thing." She tried to speak calmly, but her voice was shallow, breathless. "Will your husband, please, not come in the mornings when I read? Will you ask him? It is a little thing. He will grant it to you. Madame de Lamouderie has so few joys. It grieves me to see her happiness in being with your husband spoiled for her."

It seemed indeed a little thing, but Jill stood there, astonished. She did not know what to say. "But—he thought it would be more cheerful for her—to listen to you while he paints. He gets so absorbed when he paints." It was not the truth. The color came into her face as she said it.

"It does not make her cheerful," said Mademoiselle Ludérac quickly. "It makes her very unhappy. Very angry, too; very angry with me; though she tries to hide it."

"But what have you to do with it?" What had she to do with it? As Jill heard her own unguarded question the blood mounted hotly in her cheeks.

"I am in the way. She is very much discomposed. She does not know what to do," Mademoiselle Ludérac murmured, and as if the warmth of Jill's flush had touched her own pale cheeks, the faint, intense color rose to them. "It is as if a toy had been given to a child, and then withdrawn from it. It is not kind to treat her so! Not kind!" said Mademoiselle Ludérac with a sudden startling vehemence.

"He doesn't mean to be unkind." All sorts of thoughts were racing through Jill's mind. Why not tell Marthe, boldly, that Dick went up to see her? But at the mere thought of such an avowal her flush deepened. "He is full of caprices, you know. All artists are, I suppose. And he probably felt that he could work more peacefully—more happily, if there was reading going on. But of course I'll tell him. He won't dream of going when you are there when he knows it gives you pain."

She had not helped her friend. She had, indeed, for a moment, reduced her to speechlessness. Mademoiselle Ludérac stood there gazing, the faint color fixed in her cheek, and she murmured hurriedly, putting her hand on the door, as it with an impulse of escape: "But it must not be for me!"

"No; no—of course not!" It would be intolerable to part thus, Jill felt. She would say anything to reassure her; to bring her back. "I'll make it quite all right—I promise you. Is she really angry with you, poor old thing? What a shame, though. And how horrid for you. It's stopped raining, Marthe. What if I came with you and saw her now? It might cheer her up."

This, at last, was a happy thought. Marthe Ludérac's face was bathed in gratitude. "Will you? It is not too late? It would be the greatest joy to her."

"Of course it's not too late. It's not nearly tea-time yet . . . That's what it comes to," she thought, as they went down-stairs. "She's afraid of Dick, and he's afraid of her. How absurd it is. But now things will go better."

"When did Madame de Lamouderie come to live with you?" Jill asked.

The day was chill and sullen. The wind had dropped and the river ran, not turbulently, but in vast, heaving eddies, like molten steel. They had gone in silence along the village highway and were now on the ascent.

"After my mother's death," said Mademoiselle Ludérac. Jill saw that she, too, found relief with the old lady. "We met through Médor. She is very fond of animals, you know. She used to stop me and pat his head and I felt that she was sorry for me. She was living very sadly, very poorly, in a peasant family; in that hut below the *manoir* I told you of. The old grandmother, who is dead now, used, I think, to be a nurse in her family. I was free then to seek work, and my home was there, empty for half the year. So it seemed natural that two unfortunate people should make a common *foyer*. It is sad that she must be alone for all those winter months. But Joseph, whom I leave with her, is absolutely to be trusted. I can pay him a wage now, the good old man. And I have left the *manoir* to him, since I have no family. That is a recompense to him for all his years of devotion. If I outlive him, it will go to his relations in Buissac."

Jill was recollecting Madame de Lamouderie's references, long ago, to "my landlady—my housekeeper," and an old distaste and irony brushed across her charitable mood. She was simply vulgar, the poor old countess. She had felt that a bourgeois landlady was a more dignified adjunct than a bourgeois friend.

"Do you know anything of her life, and why she came to live here?" she asked.

Mademoiselle Ludérac, considering for a moment, turned her eyes then on Jill with a slight smile. "She has told me a great deal, but I do not feel that I know much. She had misfortunes; terrible misfortunes; that is evident. Her husband was involved in financial difficulties and I fear that he committed suicide. But I do not know. I never questioned her. She prefers not to be questioned. That she had fallen into complete destitution was but too plainly to be seen from the state in which I first found her. Yet she was always beautiful, you know"; again smiling, Mademoiselle Ludérac turned her eyes on Jill. "Always,

even, *bien mise*. A great distinction has survived everything, has it not?"

"Yes. She is beautiful; and distinguished, in spite of everything," mused Jill. The "everything," to which she referred, however, was not destitution or misfortune. The old lady was a person to whom one would forgive much. She wondered how much she had given Mademoiselle Ludérac to forgive.

Joseph opened to them at the *manoir*. "*Du thé*, Joseph," said Mademoiselle Ludérac. A stranger might have said that she spoke very tersely to the old man. But Jill was no longer a stranger. It was because affection was so secure that the tone was so short.

"You know, I really ought to get back to Buissac, to give Dick his tea," said Jill when Joseph had departed. "He may be in by then."

"But it is hardly half past three now. It would grieve Madame de Lamouderie if you did not have a cup of tea with her. I will tell Joseph to bring it at four. And I will leave you now to be with her."

"But—I'll see you again—before I go?"

The menace of immediate departure from Buissac was not yet exorcised and Jill's voice must have struck Mademoiselle Ludérac as unreasonably fearful, for suddenly she smiled, fondly, radiantly, upon her. "Yes. You will see me again." It was as if Jill had released all her imprisoned girlhood. "I will wait for you here, when you come out. Of course you will see me!" she said.

Jill, on entering the drawing-room, was at once aware, though the light was failing, of the gloomy, resentful gaze that the old lady fixed upon her. It was evidently Marthe who was expected, and her welcome would have been a grim one. When Jill's advancing figure disclosed its identity, the change of expression on Madame de Lamouderie's face was almost ludicrous. Jill pressed her back into her chair as, impeded by the rug wrapped round her knees, she tried to struggle to her feet.

"No, no, don't get up," she said, laughing. "I've just come for a little chat. I'll sit here. This will do beautifully. It's such a dismal day. I wanted to hear some of your wonderful stories."

"Ah—this is what it is to have a friend! This is what it is to have a true friend!" said Madame de Lamouderie in tones of almost vindictive assertion. "No one cares for me but you! I am abandoned by all the rest!"

"No, you're not," Jill retorted, smiling upon her. "I've just walked up with Mademoiselle Ludérac. She hasn't abandoned you, for one. And since it's probably going to go on raining, I expect you'll see Dick again tomorrow afternoon."

These two pieces of information left the old lady gaping and, for a moment, at a loss.

"Tomorrow afternoon? It is in the mornings that he has now elected to come." She had seized, at all events, the happy implication.

"Well, I'm afraid he didn't find his plan succeeded. He didn't find you more cheerful when you were being read to—though he did find you most awfully amusing and witty."

"Witty? He found me witty? *Tant mieux!*" The old lady, though aware of a change of fortune, still spoke bitterly. "He did not find me changed, most certainly. And why should he? I see Marthe day after day; month after month. I have no need to see more of her. It was him I wanted to see. And he knows it!"

"Well, it's all right now," said Jill soothingly, though she was a little taken aback.

"Ah; is it indeed all right?" said the old lady darkly. "So you may say. And we shall see. And what had Marthe to do with you that you came up together?" she added with a change of tone.

Jill considered her for a moment. Would one be able to go on being sorry for her? she wondered. This might be but the fretfulness of a sulky, froward child; but it might be something more unpleasant. There was a hint of peremptoriness in her question that Jill did not at all relish.

"Mademoiselle Ludérac came to see me," she said, looking very gravely at her. "She came to tell me the story of her life. She wanted me to know."

Madame de Lamouderie as she heard these words showed an altered face. They sobered her. She was drawn outside the consideration of her own griefs. "She told you?"

"Yes. About her father and her mother."

"Why did she tell you?" said Madame de Lamouderie after a moment.

"She felt that I was fond of her and ought to know."

Madame de Lamouderie looked into the fire. "I would not have told you had I been she. I would tell nobody of such a thing. Such avowals put one at a disadvantage."

"A disadvantage? I don't understand you."

"Our sorrows are always disadvantages, to us," said Madame de Lamouderie, and as she gazed into the smoldering fire she looked like an old sybil, wise and sinister, drawn in black and silver on the failing day. "They count against us with the world. They make us of so much less value and consequence."

"Perhaps that was what Mademoiselle Ludérac thought. Perhaps that was why she felt I ought to know—lest I should think her of more consequence than she was!" Jill spoke with her measured gravity, though the form of her words was ironic. "She can't think so now. It may be true of the world, what you say; but it's not true of decent people."

"The world is made up of what you call decent people. *Des gens forts honnêtes.*" Madame de Lamouderie could match Jill in gravity. It was a new aspect of herself she showed her as she sat there, brooding, with lowered eyes. "Put them together, and they become a herd; and a herd is the cruellest thing in nature. It scents out weakness. It hunts it down, and tramples on it. All sorrow is a weakness and weakness is the one thing one must not show the world if one wishes to keep one's skin whole and one's bones unbroken." An extraordinary bitterness infused her voice.

"You and I could never become a herd towards Mademoiselle Ludérac—however many people you added to us," said Jill. Madame de Lamouderie did not frighten her, though the aspect of life she put before her was so alien to her apprehension that she felt it strange she was not frightened. "We'd protect her if they tried to trample her. We'd never trample too."

"Ah, I do not know. I do not know," the old lady repeated, not raising her eyes. "Nor do you, *ma petite*. Human nature is a strange thing; and you are very ignorant of it, let me tell you. We all fear the herd. We all fear to oppose its impulses, lest we be victims. Fear; ambition, jealousy—which of us, to gain what we crave, or to avoid what we dread, would not take advantage of the disinherited creature? Marthe Ludérac has, through her misfortunes, been disinherited. No one will know her. No one will ever marry her. She has withered on the branch of life. Better that she should not draw attention to herself."

Jill sat opposite the grim old creature. Her happy tilted lips, her smiling eyes, were strangely hardened as she tried to think out a way of escape from these truths that she saw, for the first time, as irrefutable, yet that her heart so deeply contradicted.

"No; it's not true," she said at last, but she knew that she could find no words in which to prove its untruth. "It's not true, when people love each other. People do love each other. They do, often, sacrifice themselves for other people. Even in Marthe's case, I don't believe people meant to be so cruel. It's just happened so."

"It would so happen—to the daughter of a murderess."

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"Ah, I do not blame her mother." The old lady was terse indeed today.

"Well, I blame her. I'm horribly sorry for her; but I blame her. You ought not to kill your husband even if he has been unfaithful to you."

"Ought not!" Madame de Lamouderie laughed. "Such oughts are straws in a conflagration when jealousy flames. It is precisely as I was telling you just now. We do not know ourselves till temptation comes. Madame Ludérac could not have known that she was capable of murder until she saw the other woman in her husband's arms."

"I suppose not. But she must have had a very violent nature. And then"—Jill thought it out—"she might have loved him more."

"More!" Jill still looked at the fire and it was with almost overt antagonism that Madame de Lamouderie fixed her great eyes upon her. "It was because she loved him too well."

"Not in the way I mean. If she had loved him in the way I mean she would have understood and been sorry for him—however miserable he had made her."

"Sorry for him! *Par exemple!* No; in such a case I can see myself take up the pistol! But I should have shot his mistress first! I am one who *can* love, let me tell you."

Jill looked up at that. The great devouring eyes were on her and made her think of an astronomical photograph she once had seen; the dark disk of the sun with flames flickering round it. She could not interpret their gaze, but had she been of a timid or retreating nature she would have shrunk from it. Jill, however, was not disposed at any time to turn back before a five-barred gate.

"If you killed them, it would not be because you loved so much, but because you didn't love enough," she said, and her voice was cool and considering, a voice well calculated to anger the smoldering old lady. "They'd done nothing to deserve death, however wrong they'd been. No one has a right to take justice into their own hands like that. And if being in love is an excuse for everything, then he isn't to be blamed, either. He couldn't help it if he loved somebody else."

The old lady's eyes shot flames indeed. "Your charity is large," she said. "I do not share it. I am composed of flesh and blood, not of snow and *eau sucrée*. You are a child, a virtuous wife, and a very simple child. You do not know what love is. You have never felt passion. That has been made very plain to me, more than once, for where there is no jealousy there is no passion. These are dark themes, and since you do not understand them, or yourself, we will talk no more of them," said Madame de Lamouderie in such commanding tones that Jill gazed at her in astonishment.

She was not angry. She was displeased. She reflected for a moment and then rose. "No; we won't talk about it any more. And it's time for me to go now. Good-by," she said.

It was almost pitiful, but almost repulsive, too, to see how quickly Madame de Lamouderie could crumble. Dismay withered her face; horror widened her eyes. "But you will not leave me like this? I have hardly seen you! You have talked of nothing but Marthe! Have you no longer any feeling for anyone but Marthe! Do not go; not yet! I implore of you."

"But, you know, I think you were rather rude," said Jill, standing there above her with her hands in her pockets. "I don't like people to be rude to me."

"Rude to you! my good angel! No! It would be impossible! It was carelessly that I spoke." Madame de Lamouderie put out her hand and laid it on Jill's dress. "It was not of you I was thinking. You are my ideal of all that is wise and enchanting in womanhood! No; I am an unfortunate and embittered old woman, battered by the storms of life. You will not be so unkind as to punish me for my bad temper!"

"Of course I don't want to punish you—or anyone," Jill said, and as Joseph at that moment entered with the tea-tray, she sank down again into her chair, murmuring: "Only a few moments, then, because I really must get back to Dick."

"Tea?" said the old lady. Her cheek was darkly flushed. She turned her eyes on Joseph and spoke in a haggard voice. "How did you know we wanted tea? It is too early for tea. Five o'clock is the proper time, as I have had occasion to tell you before."

"Mademoiselle ordered it for four," said Joseph, unmoved, setting down the tray.

"It's quite right. I told her I couldn't stay to tea, and she said she'd have it sent in at four," Jill explained. "She knows you like to give me tea."

"She is thoughtful. She is considerate. She is my good angel," said the old lady, still disarrayed, watching Joseph leave the room.

"She really is; you've hit the mark this time," said Jill, laughing a little despite herself. "You know it's very wrong of you to talk about being abandoned when you have her to care for you."

"Do not lecture to me! Do not preach at me! I cannot bear it! I can bear no more today!" cried the old lady. Her relief at having bridged the breach that had threatened was so great that the shaft of actual archness in her glance gave it the cajoling charm of a naughty, impenitent child's. "Everything has gone against me today—to begin with, your husband. He has a hard heart, that man. He is a bright, destructive Lucifer! Yes; I assert it! Even Marthe was unkind to me at lunch. She is not a saint, Marthe; oh no. You do not know how severely she can speak sometimes; and with a gloomy brow.

"If you, too, go against me, there will be nothing left for me to do but to cast myself down into the river from the precipice! And I warn you, you calm young Englishwoman, that I am sometimes near doing it! You would not like to have the death of an old Frenchwoman—even of such a wicked, foolish old woman, on your conscience, would you!"

She had succeeded. She was making Jill laugh. She was happy, almost happy, if only for the fleeting moment.

"I suppose you are wicked," said Jill. "But you are certainly very charming. I can't get really angry with you."

"Ah! That is what I like to hear! Let me be charming to you and I care not how wicked you may think me!—not even if you think me more wicked than I am! That may be so, you know. I may make myself out worse than the reality. Perhaps I am not really a murderess!"

"Oh, I don't mind your being a murderess—not one bit!" Jill assured her. "It's not that sort of thing I mind."

"Did I call you simple? Just now? When you were so displeased with me? You are simple; I repeat it. But you are also very shrewd, very wise and shrewd, my dear young friend. You are as well aware as the most sophisticated misanthrope that it is the large crimes of which we prefer to be thought capable, rather than the small, mean ones; the crimes of the individual, not the crimes of the herd—eh?"

"Yes. I suppose it's that," Jill smiled, stirring her tea, for while she had listened to Madame de Lamouderie she had poured out tea for them both. The old lady had forgotten it in her absorption. "It's nice, I suppose, to feel oneself a tiger, rather than a sheep."

"Precisely. Think of me as a tigress. A lonely, sad old tigress, tamed by you," said Madame de Lamouderie.

As a fire smolders long and at last suddenly bursts into flame, Graham's love for Marthe flares up beyond control in a dramatic moment when they are alone—as Anne Douglas Sedgwick *tells* in February

The Crippled Lady of Peribonka (*Continued from page 25*)

it cared nothing for James Kirke, on whose millions it fed, but for Carla Haldan it held a warm affection. Out of the Pit came tributes of flowers which smothered the little cottage on the Hill.

The next day Carla was among her children in the school. This was the most amazing part of her fortitude. Two days later Paul was called unexpectedly to New York.

The new life which submerged him for a fortnight, its passionate business details, its conferences, the talk of still more millions and of greater activities, was like a plunge into a maelstrom. It was worse than the Pit.

He spent only a part of one day in his own home, where Claire would be on her return from Europe. It was filled with a cathedral stillness, wrapped up, packed away, moth-protected, guarded by soft-footed and obsequious servants who made him shiver.

He had written to Claire immediately after the death of Carla's mother, and toward the end of the fortnight he sent her another letter. Inspirationally he made a suggestion. If she would come back, and spend only a little while with him at Mistassini, he would take her anywhere she might want to go when the job was off his hands—around the world, if that would please her. It would be rather wonderful, wouldn't it? Around the world—just they two! He asked the question with almost boyish hope and earnestness.

He was glad when the day arrived for him to leave, for there seemed to be something of homeness about the Pit for him now. A press of business awaited him at his office, and not until the day after his return did he see Carla. The tragic strain which he had observed in her face before her mother's death had disappeared. A deeper and more permanent thing had taken its place, and though it was less poignant it stirred him for a moment with a sensation of uneasiness, as if he had personally lost something, as if a distance as wide as the Pit itself had come between them.

She came to his office on Saturday morning with an armful of asters. She asked about Claire. As she arranged the flowers she bent over his desk so that the silky head was very near him, and suddenly he felt himself overwhelmed by a flame.

When Carla's deft fingers finished their task she found Paul looking at her with a face that was wholly Indian once more. He thanked her as he might have thanked her a year ago. His hand touched hers for just a moment, and a swift throb came in Carla's throat. Their eyes met, Carla's faultlessly clear and pure and filled with a shining light—Paul's with a somber, settled grimness far back in them. Then Carla left him.

It was her last visit to his office.

He made no effort to blind himself to the thing which had leaped upon him so irresistibly when he had looked at her head bent over his desk. He wanted Carla, and that want was as much a part of him as his vision or his sense of the obligations of life. His regard for her was not a sudden irruption. He could look back and see where it had been growing in him slowly over a period of three years.

After this he was more than ever filled with the desire to go among the men and work with his hands, and he was seldom in his office. He went to Peribonka frequently during these autumn days, and once a week had flowers sent to him from Roberval for Mrs. Haldan's grave. Carla knew of his visits to the little cemetery, and Paul made no effort to conceal them from her.

When she tried to express to him the depth of her gratitude he talked as if it were the spirit of his own mother he was thinking of when he took flowers to Peribonka. But he felt he was not hiding the truth from her, and was rather glad of it.

A letter from his wife helped him in his fight. Claire laughed at him pleasantly for his whimsical suggestion of a journey around the world, and then painted in her picturesque and vivid way the torture which she knew such a trip would be for him.

"Without your forests, your open skies, your big outdoors you would die before we got half around, Paul," she wrote him. "It would be merciless of me to make you pay in that way for my presence up at the Mistassini. I am coming, and just because I want to come. I am anticipating seeing something very wonderful up there, something which will mean greatly more to you and me than six months or a year rambling around the earth. As for such a trip, with *you* in it"—and then she went on to tell him more about himself than he thought she had ever known.

The letter thrilled him. It gave him a new vision of Claire, who had never analyzed him in this gentle and understanding way. But in the end, she said her return to America might be postponed until May or June.

Carla also received a letter from Claire. It was filled with a womanly tenderness and sympathy for one who had suffered a great loss. Carla let him read it. Her eyes were strangely alight.

"It is her heart speaking to me," she said.

Carla became so deeply absorbed in work outside her school that he did not talk with her again for a week. She formed evening classes in which she taught English to the adults who wanted to come to them, and the few spare hours of her afternoons were spent among the mothers of her school children. With the coming of winter Paul buried himself more passionately in the actual stress of outdoor labor, leaving his office routine largely to others, and the change benefited him. Carla, on the other hand, seemed to have assumed too great a burden. The strain, if it were that, began to show its effect on her, until Lucy-Belle noted it and remonstrated with Paul.

"Every day she is growing less like the Carla we knew before her mother died," she told him. "She is breaking under an effort to keep her mind away from herself. You must do something, Paul, make her drop her night classes, send her away for a vacation."

Paul saw Carla the next day, a cold Sunday with snow on the ground. For the first time in many weeks they had a long walk together, and at the beginning of it she settled any suggestions he might have had in his mind, saying with a very decisive little note in her voice that to give up her work or go away as Lucy-Belle had suggested was the last thing she would think of doing.

She had heard again from his wife. It was her third letter, and came from Capri, where she was spending the winter, painting. These letters, Carla said, would always remain bright in her memories, they were so friendly and cheering. She had answered them, and had tried to tell Claire a little about her own work, and of the glory and beauty of the great forests and mighty rivers near them.

Paul knew that something of her real soul was gone even as she talked to him.

His own dragged heavily through the winter. Spring came, and his days at the Pit were almost over. August would see his work finished. He did not know what he would do then.

Late in May Paul's wife sailed from Cherbourg on the Empress of France, and, to his surprise, was coming straight to Quebec to join him.

"That is wonderful of her!" said Carla. "She is coming directly to you!"

The day he left for Quebec he saw her for a few moments to say good-by.

"I wish I were a man—*and you*," she said.

A radiance was in her face when he left her.

The crowning point of anticipation in Paul's six years of married life was his journey to meet Claire. He had a night in Quebec before the ship arrived, and was at the dock an hour ahead of it the next day.

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When at last he saw her coming down the landing-walk he could see that she was looking for him. She was the same Claire, tall, slim, exquisitely dressed, a woman to be picked out of a thousand.

When they met he held out his arms. But that was not Claire's way. She was always right, never forgetful of the fitness of things—and gave him her hands. Her fingers closed warmly about his. She raised her lips and kissed him, with the light touch of her mouth which was a part of Claire.

"Dear old Paul!" she said. "At last I'm home!"

Three days after her arrival in Quebec, Claire was mistress of the bungalow which her husband had prepared for her visit. Thereafter Paul could look from the window of his office to the physical realization of his dream. Claire was at last one of the wives who lived in the row of cottages on the Hill. While this dream, like the friendly but dispassionate greeting of his wife in Quebec, missed something in its fulfilment, it had opened doors through which he was looking to still greater things for himself and the woman who was making this fight against prejudice and environment for him.

The change in her was inexplicable, unless he accepted it as one of sheer sportsmanship. Behind her effort it was not difficult for him to see the truth—her struggle against instincts and impulses as deeply inborn as was his own Indian blood in himself. The desire to please him, its sunny cheer and friendliness, was an inspiration to him, and strengthened his resolution to twist and bend his life so that hereafter it would fit in with hers.

Each day he found something new and unexpected to increase his admiration for Claire. She became acquainted with the Pit. She put on rubber boots and explored its muddy depths with him. She made no discrimination among his friends, and nodded and smiled as pleasantly at a foreman or a laborer as she did at the others on the Hill.

More puzzling to him than these things was her intimacy with Carla Haldan. They were together much of the time when Carla was not at her work. Even in this Claire joined her now and then.

Carla came to his office again, but always with Claire. The two had a real affection for each other.

Claire came to the Mistassini on the first of June. On the fifteenth they went to what Paul called the Big Gorge, ten miles back in the rocky forests. It was Lucy-Belle who planned the expedition to the gorge, and in it, besides herself, were her husband and Paul, Claire and Carla.

On the morning of this eventful fifteenth of June, with sunshine and birds about them, Paul and Derwent rode a little behind their wives and Carla, and never had Claire looked so lovely to him. Her beautiful body seemed vibrant with the thrill of the day, her voice was sweet to hear, her eyes filled with laughter, until he could almost make himself believe she loved the things she was facing, and which had so completely conquered her until now.

Toward mid-forenoon they came to the Big Gorge. Those who have seen it can never forget the spectacle of its thundering water tearing itself out of a finger of the cavernous Laurentians, crashing through the open for a space in whirling maelstroms, then narrowing into a sullen, oily-looking avalanche of irresistible force as it descends into a chasm whose rock walls become higher and closer, until, at last, its fury and voice disappear again into the bowels of the Laurentians, making the earth tremble with its subterranean rumble and roar.

Its effect on Claire was not what Paul had anticipated. To his amazement it was she who suggested they spread their luncheon on the edge of a great slab of rock which projected into the stream, and from which they could look upon the wonderful play of water below them. This rock, several acres in extent, was covered with soil which was continually absorbing moisture from the river, so that it had clothed itself with a carpet of flowers and grass until it was an oasis of beauty in the heart of a rock-visaged landscape.

It was Claire who also selected the spot for their table-cloth, and who arranged their places afterward so that all might sit looking toward the mouth of the overhung chasm, several hundred yards down-stream. Between their position and the abyss of the gorge was a black and irresistible sweep of water which had the appearance of a flood of boiling oil on its way to the mouth of a huge funnel.

Half-way to the orifice a rock slowly wearing away with the centuries reared its grim and battered head out of the stream, cutting it like a knife in two equal parts. Even about this jagged tooth of stone was no glint of sunlit whiteness of froth or foam, and no sound came from this part of the channel except a sullen murmur and hiss. It was from the other side of the table-rock that the chief tumult came, where for half a mile or more the huge churns of the river-bed were at work, slashing and twisting the down-rushing floods, until, Paul thought, they were an inspiring and beautiful thing to look upon.

Yet it was the darker and more sinister side that Claire chose, with a scene under their eyes that was colossally awesome but equally unbeautiful.

As they ate their luncheon she let him know, for the first time, something of the strange fear which possessed her whenever she was near the fury of rushing water. Derwent roused the confession in her by saying, in answer to a question asked by Carla, that no living creature whose habitat was land could exist for more than a few seconds in the oily Charybdis below them.

Claire shrugged her slim shoulders and looked with unafraid eyes upon what Derwent had accredited with the omnipotence of super-destruction.

"Were you ever haunted by a dream?" she asked. "I have been, since childhood. Most children dream of falling from ladders and housetops, of seeing ghosts, of running away from dangers—but mine were always of woods and water. These fears have remained with me. I am terribly afraid of water, but only when it is angry. Water like this below us does not disturb me at all. It is so smooth and unbroken that I can scarcely believe what you have said, Doctor Derwent. I would jump into it without fear, while back there—where it is breaking itself into spray and foam—I would never have the courage to start!"

"There you might live—here there could be no possibility of it," said Derwent.

"I can almost fancy walking upon it without wetting my shoes, it is so firm and substantial looking," persisted Claire.

"It makes me think of a—a big boa-constrictor running into a hole," said Lucy-Belle. "I wouldn't try to walk on it, or jump into it, unless Colin fell in first and I had to help him."

"Would you—then?" asked Paul.

Lucy-Belle meditated for a moment. "Of course I would," she said. "Do you suppose I would let him go into that tunnel alone?"

"I—wonder. Life is a precious thing. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it is more precious than the person we live with. We don't idealize the women who burned themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres in India. Do we?"

"I don't think so. Their sacrifice was inspired by duty and a religious faith. Neither takes the place of love. But if Colin were down there, going to a death like that, I would want to go with him. I *would* go. I cannot explain it. Isn't there a difference?"

"Yes—a difference that is infinite," said Claire. "In this instance a woman would be joining the man she loves in a final hour of life, that they might be together in the supreme moment. It would be choosing between a few more minutes *with* him or a few more years *without* him, and minutes measured by love are more priceless to a woman than years without it."

"Also to a man," said Derwent. "I don't think we would hesitate to take the leap. Do you, Paul?"

"No."

He was looking at Carla, who was gazing upon the viscous sweep of water below them. She looked up.

"A woman's love for a man isn't always like that," she said, and something in her voice thrilled Paul. "I think there is a love so great that it is cowardly for it to die deliberately, a love so complete that when its other half goes there is still heaven left in memories of it. It is wicked to take the breath of human life from such a love because of a selfish desire not to live alone. I think, Lucy-Belle, if it came to the real test God would give you strength to hold yourself back. You would live, and cherish the memories of your love like a garden of beautiful flowers."

It was as if a cathedral bell had tolled softly among them, so wonderfully gentle and strange was Carla's voice. *Carla knew.* That was the thought which gripped Paul, and it held the others. She had passed through the fire at which his wife and Lucy-Belle were only guessing, and it was from her soul, not her lips, that evidence had come.

Claire gave a little start at his side, and her face and eyes grew suddenly and vividly filled with light as she looked at Carla, as if all in a second a great and half expected truth had come to possess her. Stranger even than the change in her face was the way in which she found Paul's hand and held it tenderly and warmly between her own. He closed his hand tightly about hers. But he was looking at Carla.

Lucy-Belle sprang to her feet and drew Derwent after her.

"Let's not get sentimental!" she cried. "I'm going to throw all kinds of things down to my boa-constrictor and see what he does with them. This to begin with"—and she flung out a paper plate which curved and circled, until, lighting gracefully upon the surface of the torrent below, it was caught like a feather and whipped with the speed of a bullet toward the maw of the gorge, without so much as getting its inner side wet.

Claire gave a gasp of amazement. "I did not dream the water sped as swiftly as that!" she exclaimed. "But see! It is as I said! The plate is going—it has disappeared into the tunnel—and not once was it ruffled or upset. Back where the water is breaking and roaring it would have been destroyed."

"Wait!" said Derwent. He rolled the short log which they had used for a seat to the edge of the cliff, and with Paul's help tilted it on end and flung it over. "There goes a man," he laughed. "Now see what happens!"

There was an oily splash, and for a few yards the wood drifted away as smoothly as the plate had gone. A smile of triumph curved Claire's lips, then swiftly a frightened look gathered in its place. A hand had reached up, an unseen hand that had gripped the log like a living thing and dragged it down until no chip or shadow of it rode the liquid serpent under them.

"Hold your eyes near the rock!" commanded Derwent.

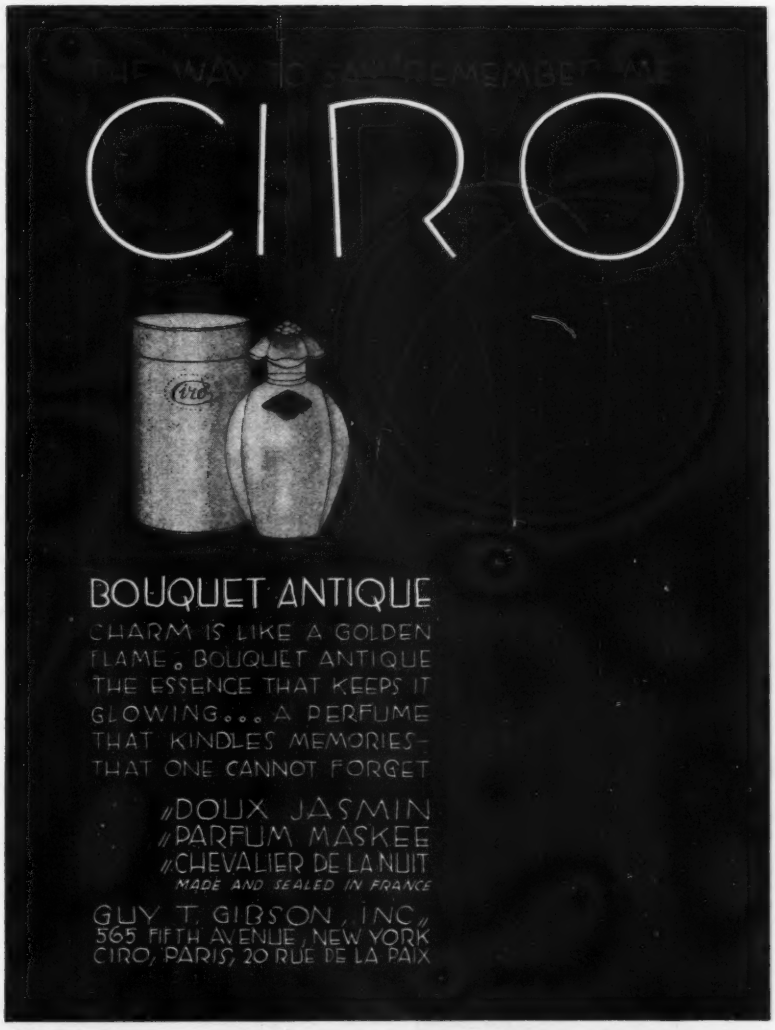
Breathlessly they watched. Half a minute later, as if spewed up by the monster who had swallowed it, the log reappeared near the huge fang which split the stream, struck against it and climbed half its length out of the water, then sank back and disappeared again, this time to be seen no more.

"Gone," said Derwent. "And if you stood at the other end of the gorge five or six miles from here you would never see that log come through. It is ground to pieces, goes out of existence in whatever there is between the walls of the chasm, which no man has ever explored and none ever will. Are you satisfied?"

Claire was staring, wide-eyed.

"I believe it—now," she said.

Again Paul looked at Carla. The calm and placid beauty of her face seemed accentuated by what they had seen.





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"And the wonder of it is there are so many who believe that nature and God are not one!" she said, only for him. "Is it possible that in the blindness of our egoism we shall always fail to understand the significance of such things as *that?* It is a Written Word, in the Hand of God, just as the Peribonka with its gentleness and sunshine is another and different message for us. That is what I believe."

Paul nodded. "So do I," he said, and felt the desire of all the world to take Carla's head against his breast and hold it there.

Guilt fastened itself upon him, and a little later, inspired by the sweetness of her manner toward him, he whispered to his wife, "Claire, you are wonderful! God knows I hope some day to make you happy!"

"You will," she answered, and the gentle mystery in her voice and eyes stirred him with a deep emotion.

Until the play grew tiresome they brought sticks and chunks of wood from the edge of the timber and fed them to the hidden hands of the stream. The result was always the same.

To end their sport Paul and Derwent staggered from the edge of the timber with a forty-foot log which had lain so long in the drying sun and wind that they could bear its weight on their shoulders.

"I've a notion to ride this log through the gorge!" exclaimed Lucy-Belle. "I want to know what is under and between those walls which you say no one has ever explored, Colin. What do you suppose can be there?"

"An inferno of devils, I imagine," replied her husband.

"Possibly not. Fairies might live there," suggested Claire.

"A black and sunless place where lovely water-maids without eyes frolic in the darkness," added Paul.

"Or a Kingdom of Micomicon, where dreams are made and sent out into the world," said Carla.

Derwent was preparing his end of the log for a final heave. "I insist it is a place of devils and death. Still, like Lucy-Belle, I'd like to see what's there. After all, it's a million years of—mystery! Are you ready, Paul?"

"Ready!"

The log pitched down, and as it went the end of it swung like a living thing and struck Paul. Even before the blow a sudden scream filled his consciousness, and as the timber caught him he saw it was Claire whose cry had tried to warn him. Then he was over.

With photographic clearness his eyes beheld his fate. The water seemed to reach up and catch him on its oily breast, and for a brief instant after this there was a sensation not unpleasing about its hold. For some unaccountable reason he felt no sense of fear or terror, even when forces that were irresistible but gentle pulled him down.

He would come up again, alive, near the jagged tooth of rock; after that would be his end, and in such an hour as this seconds became eternities of life. His wife, Carla, Lucy-Belle and Derwent were still nearer to him than the final stroke of death; he would see them, especially Claire and Carla, when he looked back in those few seconds of grace which the monsters of the undertows would give him. These two, and the supreme faith which had wrought a comradeship between him and all the forces of nature, gave him the courage not to be afraid.

The undercurrent's indrafts and refluxes carried him with a quiet and deliberate leisureliness which gave him no physical discomfort except that of holding his breath, and when, at last, he came up near the rock, and felt fresh air in his face, he had suffered no greater inconvenience than if he had taken a long dive.

His first thought was of the log, his second of the granite snag. Against this, after a moment, he felt himself being slowly lifted, and throwing out his hands he was thrilled by the fibrous, slimy touch of a rope-like substance which had gathered thickly about it just under the surface of the water. River weeds and flag had wrapped themselves in a tough belt about the rock, and so firmly had they attached themselves to it that he knew they would, for a time at least, hold up his weight.

He looked toward the cliff, and raised one hand to wave at the four who stood there. With the distance, and the water in his eyes, he could not make out which was Claire or Carla or Lucy-Belle. But something told him it was his wife who stood nearest to the edge, with her arms reaching out toward him.

And then, on the cliff, one woman said to another, "Are you going with him?"

The woman spoken to gazed wide-eyed—motionless—voiceless—and after a moment of tense waiting the other said, "Then—I am!"

Paul saw the swift, deliberate plunge through space of the slim body, which, in the uncertainty of his vision, an instinctive and positive impulse told him was Claire's. A woman's piercing cry came from the cliff, but no responsive echo of horror escaped his own lips, no sound but an inarticulate gasp as the figure struck the water and disappeared. An appalling and devastating weakness seized upon him, a deadly sickness of shock.

For an instant his brain reeled in darkness. He began to go down, easily and slowly. Then water struck into his face, and startled him, and he thrust up wildly and caught the weeds again. They hung closely to the rock, allowing him to drag his body up until his shoulders were out of water once more.

Claire would be with him in another moment or two. She would come to the surface near the rock, and he must be ready to seize and hold her with him, until the weeds gave way—or a miracle happened.

Five or six feet from him, where the water was like a pool of oil that had no motion, a little disturbance suddenly flecked its surface—a change of light, a nebulous blotch which changed under his eyes to substance, a floating mass of hair. But there was no glint of gold in what he saw. The hair was dark. Carla's face became a part of it in a moment. It seemed to him that the monsters who lived about the rock held her up for him, with a smile on her lips and in her eyes, her face toward him and her arms reaching out. He was half in a daze, and might have fancied some of the things he saw. But Carla was there. She, not his wife, had come to join him in death.

He swung himself out, thrusting against the rock, and when the ogres of the water-pit dragged at their victims, Carla was in his arms. His brain was keenly alive again, and he knew that teams of oxen could have pulled but futilely against the undercurrents, which, one after another, were transporting them irresistibly and yet without great haste through watery space. Thought of physical salvation scarcely filtered in a ray of hope through his mind, and his senses were unterrified by the suffocating presence of death. In Carla were his strength and courage.

He locked his arms about Carla closely. He could feel her clinging to him, with the same desire to remain inseparable when the end came. Strange. A Kingdom of Micomicon—a land of Alnaschar—a place of fairies—a world of dreams . . . They were going to it all. Between the walls where no man had ever looked. Death! A magnificent adventure, with Carla in his arms!

The roaring was an enormity of sound. It numbed and anesthetized, yet left him with a shred of living, thinking cells which told him they were tearing through the gullet of the gorge, and which, at the same time, held his arms unyielding as bands of steel about Carla's body.

Although close to the edge of an abyss of utter darkness, consciousness did not quite leave him. Vaguely he experienced the thrill of being transported out of a hell of tumultuous sound into a soft and gently drifting sea which was without noise or violence. Only one arm now held Carla. With the other he found himself clawing and digging into something.

During this cycle of his existence he slowly and tediously progressed, until, with air filling his lungs again, and the smothering folds of near-insensibility breaking away from him, he knew that he was no longer in water, that his fingers were clutching at soft sand, and that the burden which he had dragged with him was Carla.

There was scarcely a breath between this knowledge and the full and poignant possession of every faculty with which his brain was capable of being inspired. But darkness, mystery, the defeat of death and the fact of his own physical salvation were submerged all at once in an agonized appeal to the limp, dead form which he clasped in his arms. The spirits of the sable blackness about him listened to his voice calling Carla's name as he struggled to bring life back into her body. At last, believing her surely dead, he held her face close to him, and kissed her mouth and eyes.

When the first whisper of breath came from Carla's lips he was holding her like this. Her heart, beating faintly, responded to the call of life close against his own. Her lips grew warm. Her eyes opened. Paul kissed her again, and found that she was alive.

He did not cry out or speak, but brushed her thick, wet hair back and pressed his face close to hers, and waited. In her first consciousness Carla's arms crept about his neck. Her lips breathed his name. Words were futile for a little while. Only in silence could they claim each other, a silence of voice where other sound was moaning and throbbing about them. Both knew what it meant, as the seconds counted themselves off.

They had come through the mouth of the gorge, and were caught in a subterranean hole of the earth. Chance. A miracle. God. That they might have each other at last, with the barrier between them torn away. This was Carla's thought, and her arms drew closer about Paul. He belonged to her now, for there was no other world than this—a pit of gloom with death for its walls, an abysmal grave, where love, for a space, would build for them "the great world's altar-stairs that slope through darkness up to God."

After a time they were standing in the blackness.

More distinctly the hollow, rumbling sound about them began to impinge itself upon their ears as Paul supported Carla against his breast. What they heard was unlike anything out in the world of sun and sky. The roaring and wailing were gone, and in their place was a phantom-like cadence that moved and stirred about them, but which seemed to come mostly from a vast dome over their heads.

It was like something trying to escape, throbbing until it seemed to be beating with little clubs at the drums of their ears when it was nearest, then leaving them to intone and hum like a huge tuning-fork through the shut-in sea of gloom. It was an eternity of sound without change. In a little while it could drive a living thing mad.

Paul was fighting against his horror. Swiftly he measured the significance of the strange darkness and stranger sound, while the spirits of Abaddon and Apollyon twisted at his soul. Under rock walls, with a mountain over it, was the stomach of Lucy-Belle's monstrous serpent. Miraculously they had come into it, alive, but no miracle could be great enough to take them out. As if gloom had suddenly given way to light he saw a picture of their tomb, and the sight of it turned him coward. His arms betrayed him as they closed crushingly and afraid about Carla, holding her from what he saw. In answer, her hand came to his face and pressed it gently. He was amazed that it should be so warm. He was more amazed by the softness and sweetness of her lips when they found his in the darkness.

"I am not afraid," she said. "Are you?"

A kind of exultation came with her voice, a gladness which sent shame and triumph sweeping over him in a submerging emotion.

"Afraid? Good Lord, no!"

She drew herself out of his arms, and stood beside him, with her hand in his. Their voices had broken down a tenseness about them, and life drew closer, more sure. He wanted to see her, and fumbled in his sodden pocket for his metal box of matches.

"I'm going to strike a light, Carla. I want to look at you!"

A flare of yellow flame made a hole in the blackness. Until it died out their eyes devoured each other. Carla was like an angel. Love, transforming death into a happy incident, was an uncovered glory in her eyes at last, clearly revealed for him to see.

He knew that only the positiveness of their fate could make her look at him like this, with his wife living and waiting in another world outside. Claire seemed infinitely removed from him.

His wife would go on living. He and Carla were about to die.

He had seen understanding in the shining depths of Carla's eyes when the tiny flame had illumined their faces. She had let him know, without words, that earth-bonds were stricken from her, because there was no longer an earth for either of them. For a few hours they were to be in a world all their own. Then—their couch of everlasting sleep—together.

To feel sure that Carla knew, and that she had given herself to him because of her knowledge—that she was not afraid, but was happy in the freedom which an approaching termination of life made possible for them, filled him with an emotion which took from their brief future its stark grimness and gave to it an almost joyous aspect.

He calmly and frankly spoke the truth to her when she asked him if there was hope. She made no reply in words, but he could feel her response creeping through her finger-tips to him, could feel the tremble and thrill of it in her body. He had not frightened her, but had dispelled from her the beginning of a fear. She did not want to live. The truth seized upon and held him with a kind of shock. Back there, in Claire's world, she would be lost to him—no matter what he might do in the way other men had solved such problems. Only here, in a beginning and an end all their own, could she belong to him.

Again she was in his heart, listening to his thoughts.

"It is strange, but I want to sing in this darkness," she said. "I did not know that blindness could be so beautiful!"

"Nor I!" he answered.

During the night following Paul's accident, and Carla's leap, men were active below the gorge. Derwent lost no time in racing back to the Mistassini, and the presence of a hundred men below the chasm before midnight was the result. Men went down the river with their flaming torches, afoot along its banks and in canoes between them, questing for a shred of something which might have been a part of Paul or Carla.

Lucy-Belle, shocked into sickness, was taken to her home. But Claire remained. Men who saw her in the weird glow of the lights will never be able to forget the image of her face as it was photographed upon their memories. Her blue eyes were so wide-open and staring, so filled with an unwavering sapphire flame that at times Derwent thought of her as a spirit-goddess instead of a woman. Could Paul have seen her he would have known that at last she had conquered her fear and repugnance of the wilderness.

She had come with the first men before a trail was cut. She continued to watch through the night. Not until day came again did something give way in her, and hopelessness take its place. Then Derwent took her home to Lucy-Belle.

These searchers, could they have looked through rock, would have seen a fire. It was the second night for Paul and Carla, in a place where night and day were the same. Paul had found drifts of wood along the edge of the

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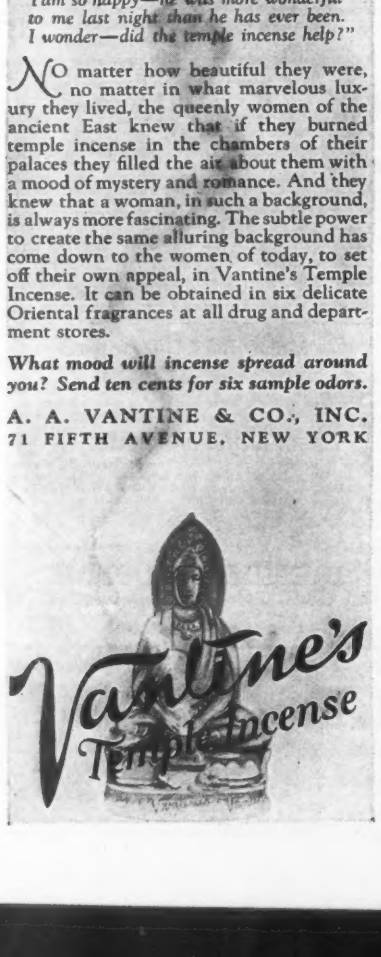
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sand, mixed with pitchy pine, and a little spot in their world was illumined by light. With blazing torches they had explored its walls and limits until the map of their universe was an indelible picture in their minds—except that part of it which hung in vast and empty blackness over their heads.

In the fire glow sat Carla, combing her long, silky hair with her fingers. She had sat in the sand at his feet a few moments before, her head pillowed against his knees, as she watched and pointed out for him the unusual and beautiful pictures that built themselves in the changing coals and crumbling embers of the fire.

Now she was a little distance from him, and no sense of dread or fear oppressed him as he followed the rhythmic movements of her slim, white fingers braiding her hair again.

If it were madness which possessed him it was a beautiful madness, a sense of joyous living where there should have been despair. Death seemed vague and far away, and the glory of life very near. When Carla had sat at his knees this spark of hope had leaped into flame. It still remained as she yielded at last to his demand and gave herself to the bed he had made for her, with his coat for her pillow.

"It seems almost a sin to sleep," she said; yet, after a little, her lashes drooped. For a while Paul sat close and watched her, and with each breath the flame in him grew stronger, the demand that something happen, through force of God or man, to break down the walls of death which environed her.

Alone, with Carla's unconscious form lending faith and inspiration to his thought, he fixed his attention, as he had done a dozen times before, on the smoke which rose from the burning wood. Where did it go?

Hours ago he had asked himself this question, and until he had discovered a thin fog of smoke settling over the water, and drifting away with the rush of it, his blood had run swiftly with a thrill of hope. And now, in spite of the fact that he knew where it went, the question remained.

He chose a stick heavily weighted with pitch and lighted the end of it in the fire. Then he walked off into the gloom where he and Carla had gone many times before. It was like following the inside of a great rock drum which was flat on one side—flat where the water thundered and raced through the mountain.

When his torch burned short he returned for another and buried himself in blackness again, following the rock wall so closely that his body touched it, trying at every step to pierce with his vision a little farther into the Stygian pit over his head. It was into this pit that the smoke went, mounting in drifting spirals.

There was only one break in the circular wall of gruesomely black rock. This was where a small section of it had given way from overhead, and had piled up a mass of broken stone which he had climbed, with Carla watching from below. Here the smoke from his torch did not go upward, but settled about his head and disappeared toward the vent in the moun tain through which the river rushed.

He went to this outlet. It was a hole which his eyes were unable to measure, choked to within a foot of its upper jaw by a seething flood of water, and out of which—though the space for sound was small—came such a sullen rumbling that his blood chilled.

He went to the débris of rock again and began to climb the broken mass, as he had done once before. He had gone about thirty or forty feet above the floor of their dungeon then, but this time he found new footholds which carried him a little farther, until, from the point he reached, he could look over the bulge in the rock which had previously concealed their fire, and could clearly see Carla in the glow of it.

If Carla had awakened, and had turned her eyes toward him, she would have seen a strange thing happen. The burning piece of pitch-wood was a spout of yellow flame, illumining at times the ghostly figure that bore it, and then floating alone in a limbo of midnight emptiness as if borne by shades that in color and spirit were a part of the gloom. She might have thought, rousing herself from slumber, that hands which were no longer Paul's were bearing it toward the roof of their world. Steadily up into this pit of Acheron it went, and there it disappeared.

For a time utter darkness lay where the light had been. Then the torch reappeared as suddenly as sable wings had engulfed it, and in another moment it was plunging down through space. In a few minutes Paul came where it had fallen sputtering in the sand, and picked it up. His face was like that of a ghost. His cheek was marked by a bleeding wound.

He went to the edge of the water and bathed his face and hands. Then he returned to the fire and knelt beside Carla. He raised her head gently in his arms. "Carla!" he whispered.

Her lips moved, her lashes trembled, and opened slowly to unveil her eyes.

She was looking at him in another moment, with her hands at his face.

"You have slept a long time," he said. "At least—it seemed long—and I took a torch and climbed the pile of rocks again. I went higher than before—so high that I came to a ledge, and followed it—and then I came to a great crack in the wall, and there, at the end of it—I saw—*light*."

"Light!" she breathed.

"Yes, light. From the sun. I have found a way out."

There was silence then. Almost without effort, it seemed to Paul, Carla crept out of his arms. He knew that something was going with her—forever. Her face was whiter than his own. What he had dreaded to see lay in her eyes—a thing fighting back and crushing the glory which had lived in them for a little while. The understanding of what his discovery meant came quickly to her, and he saw a fabric of assembled dreams going to pieces. When its hundred disintegrated parts came together again, they formed Claire's face, waiting for him at the end of the trail of light.

Paul knew the thing he wanted to say would come in a moment, the thing he had made up his mind to say to Carla when he came down from the rocks. It was a fury of emotion, a bitterness against life as it had been given him to live, a determination to turn it his own way at last. Fiercely his arms were about her.

"I have lived a hell in this place," he cried. "Not because I was afraid to die, but because in dying I knew I would lose you. That world up there means nothing to me—except with you in it. It, too, has been a hell for me. Now I'm going to make it a heaven. I won't let this man-made law and convention which you are thinking about stand in the way of what is right and intended to be. You are mine, and I shall have you and keep you, one way or the other. We'll face the world together, and tell it so—or we'll go out there and never let it know we live. It is for you to say which it shall be!"

Her hands pressed against him, and with that pressure came such a change in her face that the fierceness of Paul's arms relaxed, and he saw an idol crushed and broken in her eyes. To the level of that ruin he had sunk his own ideal of Carla. He let her move away from him, and stood with a grim, set face before her.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I know you are thinking that I am vile and unclean."

"Not that," she spoke quickly. "I would rather think I am the one who is unclean."

That was all she said, and he made no effort to answer her. Words became futile, even impossible, as she looked at him. He saw Carla as he had always known she would be when it came to her love for a man. Only a love that had no scar of ugliness upon it would she take to her breast and hold there. The memory of love, its burned-out ash, a love that was crippled and blind, but clean, she would cherish with the sacred faithfulness of an altar-nun. But not such a love as he had offered her—a theft, though it could be made a legal theft, from another woman.

Even as he felt this crushing sense of his loss of her, another emotion, a freeing of his spirit, a rejoicing with his grief, entered into him. Carla, as she stood before him, he could worship through all eternity. The Carla he had asked for, yielding to him, would have descended out of heaven to the level of his own debasement. Clearly as she had seen his passion, and felt the crush of his arms, Carla now saw this change in him, and slowly, believing joyously, a miracle wrought itself in her face, and all that Paul had seen broken down built itself up again. Softness came into her mouth, and she smiled at him.

"Shall we go, Paul?"

He bowed his head, then picked up the coat which had been her pillow.

"Yes. The cleft in the rock faces west, and I think the sun was setting when I found it. If we can get out before dark, and make a racket, someone may be near enough to hear."

He lighted a torch, and they walked across the sand together. At the pile of rocks he took her hand, helping and guiding her, until they came to the beginning of the ledge.

They continued upward. The fire was shut out. The ledge widened, and turned, so they were going through a tunnel in the rock, where water had once made its way to underground depths. They had gone only a short distance when Paul stopped and smothered his torch in the sand until its flame was extinguished. A pale reflection of light lay ahead of them. When they reached it they could look up through a long, narrow fissure that sloped steeply, with day at the top of it. It was a two- or three-hundred-yard climb, littered with broken rock which half choked the ascent in places. A mass close to them had freshly fallen.

"I spoiled my shirt in that," said Paul. "I loosened the stuff, and came down with it. I hope there isn't another place like it."

An intonation reached them faintly. Engineers were using dynamite somewhere down the river in an effort to find their bodies. What an unearthly drama it would be, Paul thought—coming upon their friends as they would soon be doing, like spirits returning from the dead. Yet he was not thrilled. There was light enough for him to see how terribly Carla was fighting for the courage to face their unexpected gift of life.

He led the way over the pile they had to climb, helping her where it was roughest. Twice in the next hundred feet they were compelled to make their way almost straight up the walls of the crevice, dragging and pulling themselves by means of jagged projections. They were half way when the fissure split apart, and they stood in a walled pit twenty feet square, from which a narrow, rock-filled corridor continued upward, like a precipitous exit from a dungeon.

Paul was breathing deeply from his exertions, and Carla was fighting for breath. Over them was a broader light of day. He could have flung a stone up to the level of the earth, and beyond that was a sky of vivid blue, still touched by the glow of a declining sun. It was this light, descending in a pool upon them, which made him see another Carla.

Something in her had died since they left the pitch-wood fire. The ash of it was in her face, the ghost of it in her eyes, and she knew that he saw it, and tried to smile at him bravely.

"I'm glad you understand," she said, as if he had spoken, and knew what was in her mind. "I might run away. That would be easier for me. I could hide myself somewhere, and always remember, and always love you. I would be—almost—happy. But I must do the other thing. I must go to Claire. It will be hard to do that."

He moved to the edge of piled-up débris and began to investigate it, cautioning her to stand back a little. The rubble loosened under his feet, and slid down. There was a small rock-slip before he had gone far, sending up a cloud of dust between them. Through this, when it had settled, Carla followed him. She heard him calling to her to go back, but in a moment was standing at his side. Almost above them, so steep was the ascent, the fissure narrowed to half a dozen feet in width, and was choked with loose rock and sand. Paul looked at it with somberly appraising eyes, and instinctively put himself between it and Carla.

Another explosion of dynamite sent a scarcely perceptible tremor through the earth. Slight as it was, a tiny stream of sand and pebbles came trickling down from the suspended avalanche. He took her swiftly back to safety.

"Funny, how little things put themselves in our way!" He tried to speak lightly. "The fissure is clear as a floor beyond that slug of débris, which is ready to topple. We could be out in five minutes if it were not for that. As it is, I've got to take a chance."

"What are you going to do?" asked Carla.

"We passed a long stick back there," he said. "By hugging close to the wall I think I can use this stick as a lever under one of the keystones in the slide, and loosen it. It won't be difficult, and the whole thing will come down like a house with the foundation pulled out from under it. I'm going to take you back a distance."

"You mean," said Carla, with quick understanding in her eyes, "that you are going to take the stick and pry one of the rocks loose, but not from the edge of the wall, for no foothold is there. Your intention is to stand in front, and make an effort to get out of the way when the avalanche starts."

"I am sure I can do it."

"If it comes slowly, yes. But if not——"

She accompanied him to the downward exit of the small, room-like prison they had entered, and listened to his footsteps until the sound of them grew faint. Then she ascended to the crest of the rock-slip again. A score of feet beyond lay the danger-point. Between it and where she stood was the rough depression out of which Paul would be compelled to race for his life, should he loosen the avalanche. There was an overhang of rock, high up, and she did not see how he could escape it.

Light was fading swiftly and evening shadows were falling between the deep, close walls of the crevasse. A radiance was in Carla's face. She could hear Paul's footsteps returning, and her lips moved, yearning to call his name. Then she ran down into the hollow, and up its farther edge. After all, it might not be such a sword of Damocles over them. If it were not, then Paul could only scold. If it were——

She began to climb.

Paul heard the crash. He was a little beyond the place where he had left Carla, and ran to it, calling her name. He leaped through the dust which was settling quickly and heavily, and saw the hollow choked to the brim with the débris of the avalanche. Carla was caught in the last grip of it, near the crest of the rock-slip. The upper part of her body was out, and she was alive when Paul reached her. He tried to speak as he tore at the rocks. But his voice was gone. He saw Carla's eyes looking at him, with the light fading out of them. She made no sound. Her eyes were closed when he had her in his arms at last. Yet she was not dead—he found himself saying the words over and over as he climbed with her out of the fissure.

It may be that the full story of Carla Haldan and Paul would never have been known had it not been for the happening of this night. It seems reasonable that neither Claire nor the others would have told the more intimate of its details. A madman told the story. The madman was Paul. He came into the engineers' camp in the middle of the night. They did not know him at first, for brush and limbs and rocks had disfigured him in the darkness. His face was like that of a man who had been beaten with naked fists. His clothes were half gone. His feet were bleeding through the shredded leather of his boots. In his arms he carried a woman, a dead woman, they thought.



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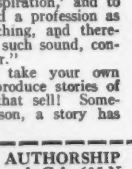
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Not until Derwent unwrapped the coat with which her head and shoulders were protected, and saw her face, could he clearly realize that the man was Paul.

They took Carla to the Mistassini.

She was carried gently, but quickly, in a litter—with half a dozen men taking turns in bearing her.

Even then, in his exhaustion, Paul insisted on walking at her side until the last nerve in him broke. It was this which robbed him of a day and a night of conscious life.

When he came to himself again, after hours of torturous sleep, Derwent told him that Carla was badly hurt, but would live.

Claire, he said, had returned to her people in New York the second day after his supposed death. Word had been sent to her that he and Carla were alive, and she had replied with a telegram. Derwent gave it to Paul.

"*I am so happy,*" it said. "*Come to me as quickly as you can. Only God knows how glad I am.*"

Paul went to see Carla soon afterward. He had taken a great deal of pride in the clean, white hospital he had built for the company, and now he blessed it. Derwent told him what it had meant for Carla. They had X-rayed her, and had made the extraordinary discovery that there was not a broken bone in her body. But something had happened to her back, and she was paralyzed from her waist down. Temporarily, he believed. Knowing what Paul would have done under the circumstances, he had sent to Quebec and Montreal for expert assistance.

Carla was propped up against a mass of pillows in her snowy bed when Paul arrived. He had not expected to find her so like a flower whose soul a breath might carry away.

He seated himself beside her and she let her hand creep over the coverlet to him.

"Please don't scold me, Paul," she said faintly, trying to smile. "You see, I was right. If the rocks had buried you, I could never have got you out and brought you home. Could I?"

He did not answer, but held her hand so closely that a joyous little melody of content came for a moment in her throat. "I am glad. I was afraid you would be angry with me. Now I know that I shall get well quickly!"

It seemed difficult for them to find things to say. Paul, fighting, with the grimly set lines of an Indian in his face, was holding back what he wanted to tell her. Carla knew. A little more and she would have cried. He told her about the specialists who were on their way, and that their own staff had no doubt but that she would very soon be on her feet again. He tried to talk without a strain in his voice.

At last, when it was time for him to leave her, she said, "When are you going home?"

"I don't know," he replied.

"It must be soon," she urged. "I want it that way. You must start today—or tomorrow. Only that will make me well. Claire wants you. Please—read this——"

She gave him a crumpled, yellow slip of paper. It was a telegram, crushed, as if she had been holding it a long time before he came. He smoothed it out and read the words which his wife had sent her. The message was almost identical with the one he had received. "I am so happy," it said. "Send Paul to me as quickly as you can. Only God knows how glad I am."

"She has faith in me," said Carla. "She asks *me* to send you to her. What a privilege that is, Paul, for one woman to give to another! No matter how hard I try I can never be as wonderful as Claire. The world does not hold many women like her. She loves you. She wants you. When will you go to her?"

"You said—tomorrow."

"Yes, tomorrow."

"I will go," he said. "But sometime I will come for you, Carla. Maybe not now, not in this life, but sometime. May I continue to dream that?"

"It is not a dream," she said. "It is faith. I am giving you up for a little while, that is all. Sometime, in another life, these tests which God put upon us will return you to me."

When he looked back at her from the door she was smiling, her eyes filled with tears.

The next day he left for New York.

He read Claire's telegram many times on the way south. There was a strange singing in his heart, and a dull grief. If she should love him—at last—after years of waiting, and hoping, and of yearning for a woman to be a part of him—children—a home he had dreamed of——

He folded the telegram for a last time and put it in his pocket.

He was seeing the tears in Carla's eyes.

Paul had told only Claire that he was on his way to her. At the station a familiar face came out of the hurrying streams of humanity to greet him. It was Jimmy Ennerdale, whose presence always gave him greater comfort than that of any other man. He had known Ennerdale for a long time, and Claire had grown up with him like a sister. Jimmy had always seemed older than Paul, with a premature grayness in his hair and a slight stoop in his thin, sensitive body. His affection for Paul possessed the unchangeable quality of the marble out of which he was slowly chiseling fame for himself as a sculptor.

He had been working in the West, and Paul had not seen him for a year. Ennerdale had grown older in that time, he thought. His face was thinner, his hair whiter over his temples, his physical tone even less robust than when he had seen him last. He had the same quick, nervous alertness about him, and it did Paul good to see the gladness in his face as they gripped hands. He knew that Claire, unable to meet him herself, had sent Jimmy in her place.

"She is like a child, waiting for you," said Ennerdale, as they rode toward his home. "I was there with Mother, last evening, and she asked me to meet you. She cried, and laughed, and is damnably happy."

Paul had an odd feeling of not knowing what was going to happen as he left Ennerdale and entered his home. He could feel himself under a strain roused by the nearness of explanations which it was Claire's right to hear, and his duty to make. It would be hard to talk about Carla, as he must.

Claire was waiting for him in her room. Both were sensitive, each a little fearful of what one or the other might betray in their first greeting.

As her door closed behind him, his first impression was of a room filled with flowers. Claire was bending over a mass of white roses when he entered, and from these she looked up quickly, then came toward him with both hands held out. She did not put her arms about him or offer him her lips, yet never had he seen such a light of happiness shining in her eyes. He made a movement to kiss her, but she drew back in such a way that her act seemed scarcely to be repelling him.

"Not now, Paul. Not until we have talked. Then, if you want to kiss me, you may."

She was astonishingly free of the tension which he had anticipated, and as she stood with her fingers clasped warmly about his, telling him how glad she was that he was alive, and how doomed to despair and unhappiness she would have been if he had not lived, to return to her, he wondered if it were Claire, his wife, who was talking to him, or another Claire—someone he had never known. For she seemed, all at once, to have drawn herself farther away from him than she had ever been, but in such a sweet and friendly way that the change in her seemed one which could not bring hurt with it.

It was Claire's fight that was hardest. It was going to take a Joan of Arc courage to say what she had planned to say.

She made him sit near her, so they were facing each other.

"Paul, we are going to be honest. You will promise me that?"

He knew he was preparing to equivocate as he gave his word. A lie, to save Claire from hurt, was more creditable than truth. The impulse to shield her, to keep from her all suspicion of his love for Carla swept over him as he looked at her. She was like the flowers on the table, as easily crushed, he thought.

Then Claire, gazing at him in these epic, introspective moments, surprised him by saying:

"I wonder if you know just how much I honor and respect you. I wonder if you realize how fine you are. I have failed to play my part—as your wife. I have not let you know these things as I should. The fault in our lives is not yours. It is mine. I think I could have made you love me. Yet I saw the unfairness of it, unless I could make myself love you first. I hoped and prayed for that. I wanted to love you. But I discovered—after a little while—that something was in my way."

"I know," he found himself saying. "You couldn't love an animal, Claire. I was that, until the day you came to the Mistassini. Always the woods, the rough side of life, the things you could not like. It was your Nordic, and my Indian—conflicting poles repelling each other. I am going to submerge this part of me. I have been blind and brutal. God knows I am only half worthy of you!"

"And Carla?"

So softly did his wife speak Carla's name that for a moment it seemed as if he had not heard it.

"We have promised ourselves to be honest," she continued. "Do you remember a letter I wrote you from Paris, in which I said I was coming to you, and that I was sure a more important thing would happen for us in your woods than any journey, like your promised one around the world, could give?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Do you know—now—why I told you that?"

"I have only wondered."

"It was because I had seen, because I had read between the lines of your letters, because I knew at last a great love had come into your life, and that Carla Haldan had brought it to you. You do not love me. You love Carla. And, loving her, you would sacrifice everything for my sake."

His fabric of lies was gone, his soul laid bare under the gaze of his wife's eyes.

"I want to hear you say it, Paul. That is why I came to you there. A woman may hide her love from a man, but not from another woman, and it was impossible for Carla to keep her secret from me. Yours was still more open, though I saw you making a magnificent fight. I know, Paul. But I want to hear it from your lips. I must hear it. Do you love Carla Haldan?"

"Yes, I love her."

He was conscious of having struck a deadly blow, a hurt he would rather have died than inflict upon Claire. But she did not flinch. A starry, radiant light came into her face, and she gave a breathless, half articulate cry, not of shock or of pain, but of joy.

"I thought I would hurt you," he said. "And you are glad!"

"Yes, I am glad. I thank God you love Carla."

She rose to her feet, and took a letter from the table. She was trying to keep from crying as she gave it to him.

"I want you to read it and then come back to me," she said. "This evening, if you will, Paul. I lack the courage to tell you things. You will understand when you open it, alone."

It did not seem to him that he was going from his own home when he left her. Nothing seemed the same. He went to the Kirke-Durand Building. On one of the floors was an office, always ready for him. He shut himself in and locked the door.

He opened the letter. There were many pages, closely written in Claire's hand. With almost childish candor they began to tell him of a woman's fight to triumph over herself. There was nothing of vanity or self-conceit about them, and neither were timidity nor humility in what she had put down for him. Like an indestructible redolence they breathed the sureness of Claire's faith in herself.

Without emotional effort she told him that unless Carla had come into his life she would never have let him know what she was about to reveal. There was no man in the world more worthy of a woman's love than he, she said. Yet, from the beginning, she had been unable to build her respect and admiration into the greater thing she should have given him. That was one reason why she had kept herself away from him so much.

There was another reason, but this was not disclosed until he had read many pages, each of which let him look a little deeper into her heart and impressed on him a little more the pride she felt in having been his wife. But pride was not, and never could be, love.

Then she spoke of another man. It was of Jimmy Ennerdale, the sculptor, who was driving his way so persistently to success. She had accepted Jimmy almost as a brother during her girlhood, but very soon after her marriage the truth had come to her, she said, and had grown stronger with each year. She cared for Ennerdale just as Carla cared for him. She knew that Ennerdale loved her, and repeated that a man could not conceal that fact from a woman, though he did not express it in words, and she was sure Jimmy had no idea of her sentiment toward him.

This love for Jimmy was the other thing, the more vital of the two, which had held her aloof from Paul. She loved Jimmy's work, and wanted to become a part of it. She had never held it to be possible and had not thought of it in that way until she knew that he loved Carla.

Paul finished, and it seemed as though tiny raindrops were falling in his brain, so clearly could he hear and feel the beating of his pulse. Claire had given him new life, and with it love and happiness. He crushed her letter in his hand as if some fitful breath might wrench its precious pages from him.

Then he turned to the telephone. It was impossible for him to wait. He wanted to tell her there was one other woman in the world as wonderful as Carla.

In Claire's voice was a trembling note of happiness when he said this.

"Dear old Paul!" she cried softly. "But you mustn't come to me until evening. I have something which I must do before I see you again."

That night when he went to his home, Claire was not there.

She had left a note for him.

"I have gone to see Carla," it said. "Only a woman can make another woman—like Carla—understand."

And here we find ourselves where we began, with the lovely Crippled Lady on her porch at Peribonka.

She had lived a year in Peribonka when we set out to tell this story. A winter had passed, another spring, a summer, and now it is the beginning of glorious September.

There have been changes since she was borne from the hospital to the place, near her mother, where she wants to live. The Pit is no longer a pit, but a mighty force driving its energy in unending streams through high-tension wires. This change—or development—was expected, anticipated by experts almost to the day and hour. But others were not.

The world, for instance, accepting a very small corner of it as the whole, could not understand why a man like Paul Kirke should deliberately sever himself from the huge prestige and wealth built by his father's success, and, as the story went, bear away with him all his personal possessions in a trunk and a handbag. It could understand, quite easily, how a husband and wife might end their marital relationship, but it was puzzled and shocked that a woman like Claire Kirke should throw herself away, soon afterward, on a stoop-shouldered, prematurely aging man who was

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possessed of nothing on earth but an admirable passion for shaping things out of marble.

Claire went West to join Jimmy Ennerdale in his work of completing a marble group for an important civic center. After she got there, she wrote Carla:

"It is magnificent. When it is finished we are going to spend a year in Capri, working together."

Capri, the Mediterranean—the habitant country, Lac Saint Jean——

"It is glorious here," Carla wrote back. "I love September!"

She always sits on her porch so that she is looking up the river toward the north. Paul is there, working out a part of the dream which absorbs them both. Thirty miles beyond the green and blue-black edge of wilderness which she can see, Paul has a timber concession, and fifteen men working with him, where a little while before he might have had fifteen thousand. But these fifteen men, and what they are planning to do with the concession, mean more to Paul and Carla than all the millions in the world.

"It is not necessary to slaughter nature, or even harm her, in order to possess for ourselves some of her products," Paul says in a paper he is writing for a pulpwood journal. "There is such a thing as harvesting timber, and having a better forest each year instead of a diminished one. Nature wants to fraternize with us, and will, when we cease to sack and plunder her like vandals."

Next year the fifteen men will be increased to fifty, but now camps are being built and just enough timber harvested to cover the expense of the work. Paul labors with his ax, along with the others, from morning until night.

Every Friday he comes down the river to Carla.

And every day he sends her messages.

This is what happens. As the Peribonka descends between its sand-bars it turns at the head of an island not far from the village, and in a gently sweeping curve forms a big pocket near Carla's home, which has a habit of gathering and holding quantities of driftage which comes down the stream. This driftage, in the form of wood, the village boys gather for their homes, and now whenever they find a freshly peeled stick or log they look for the notches in it which proclaim it a message from Paul. It is an exciting game, as thrilling for Carla as for the children. The river seems to enjoy it, too, for in one month it brought to Carla five of the hundred or so "messages" which Paul had given into its care, a conclusive proof of its unusual friendship and cooperation.

At least, Carla and Paul think so.

Friday is the day Carla is loveliest. Alena, the Swedish woman who cares for the house, is very busy on this day, and both she and the mistress she worships are excitedly preparing and waiting from the time the sun is up.

Carla knows about when his gasoline launch will appear at the head of the mile of straight-water above the village, late in the afternoon, but she is on her porch, watching the river, hours before that. When the launch comes in sight she remains until she is sure Paul has seen her, and then has Alena wheel her into the cottage. There she waits for him. He has such a furious way of catching her up in his arms, as if she were a little girl, and holding her there, smothered with kisses, that it is the only possible place.

Carla knows that she is going to get strong and well. This mental attitude, her sureness and optimism, together with her great happiness, have overcome the doubt of physicians. She is beginning to stand a little, with Paul's arms about her, and their two precious days a week together are filled with wonderful plans of what she is going to do in another year. Wherever Paul is, there she will also be. That is the point from which they always start in building their castles.

No shadow is cast over their happiness because Carla cannot walk. Paul wheels her about the village in the big chair, and not a cottage is missed in their visits. They go as far as the little, picturesque old cheese factory, and down the hill to the still older wharf where the boat comes in from across the lake. Doctor Derwent, who is at Mistassini, has allowed Carla to go twice to the monastery, in Paul's launch, and if October is fine she will make her first trip to his concession during that month. Paul takes her over the soft, sandy roads to the edge of the blueberry plains in a buggy, and then carries her in his arms to a place where she can help him pick fruit for their Sunday dinner. He will never give up carrying her like that, he says, even when she is strong again.

Peribonka has grown happier with them. Even Maria Chapdelaine is younger, and Samuel has forgotten his financial losses.

So Carla wrote to Claire:

"It is glorious here. I love September!"

A Very Wise Fool (Continued from page 43)

see what it is that you're hiding, Mary."

"Aw, Pants, it ain't anything."

You can't be father and mother and brother without being able to read the emotions of those towards whom you stand in such triple relationship. Pants loved his sister with that singleness of devotion which those possess who live for others.

"Mary Regan, if you don't tell me what's ailing you, I'll bat you right across the jaw," he threatened. It was as though he said to her, "Mary, when you cry my heart breaks."

For it isn't the thing you say; it's what you mean. Mary knew what Pants meant.

"Pants, it ain't anything, honest!" Having said which, she placed in his hand a pamphlet.

Pants glanced at it. It was the prospectus of a convent school outside of Philadelphia. For four hundred dollars a year, a girl would receive board and tuition and would be supplied with clothing. She would be prepared for a business career.

Four hundred dollars a year was eight dollars a week, approximately. Like the gentleman that he was, Pants Regan never told his sister of the opportunity offered by Brainerd, acceptance of which would have rendered Mary's ambition impossible of fulfilment.

Five years later, when Mary had graduated and was self-supporting, it was time for Jerry to enter college. Pants Regan, prematurely old, working sixteen hours a day, was able to finance the younger boy's education.

He was a drab, stoop-shouldered, withered old man of twenty-five when Jerry graduated and began to earn his own living. And on the day that Jerry landed a job in a brokerage house in New York, Pants Regan went again to visit Banker Brainerd.

Brainerd's good-humored face saddened at sight of the boy to whom he had offered a chance years ago.

"I like you, Pants," he said. "But, dog-gone it, a bank is an institution taking care of other people's money. I can't pay you a cent more than I offered you nine years ago. And maybe you won't be as quick to learn as you would've been then. However, if you want to try . . ."

I wish I could record the rapid rise of Pants Regan to the vice-presidency of the bank, and his marriage to Ephraim Brainerd's daughter. Unfortunately for romance, however, Brainerd didn't have a daughter, and if he had it is very doubtful that she would have bestowed a second glance on Pants Regan. He had been, as an infant, the possessor of a pair of gay blue eyes that offset his snub nose, too prominent teeth, and too freckled skin.

But the jeers of corner loafers had long ago stolen the gaiety from those blue eyes. Dulled



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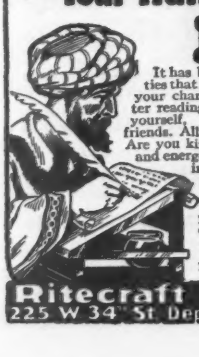
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were the fires of ambitions that had later burned in them. Pants Regan was not destined to inspire ardor in the breasts of women. Nor was he able to feel ardor for women. Those who give too much to their families have little left to give to the rest of the world. The much adored aunt is always an old maid; the beloved uncle is ever a bachelor.

As for advancement in the bank, it came very slowly. Nevertheless, at thirty Pants Regan was assistant teller, in receipt of a monthly salary of one hundred and twenty dollars. Sixty of this he spent upon his living expenses; the rest he put into bank-stock. He had saved fifteen hundred dollars, and the phœnix of ambition was beginning to arise from the ashes of despair, when he received a letter from his sister Mary.

"Dear Pants: I hate to bother you with my troubles, but the baby has been sick and Tom has just lost his job."

There was more to the letter, but Pants paid little attention to it. He had hoped, when Mary had married Tom Ryan and had gone to live in Baltimore, that she was fixed for life, as he phrased it. It took all of his savings, plus fifty percent of his salary for the next five years to keep Mary and her husband and their increasingly numerous offsprings. Then things broke better for the Ryans, and Pants, older and drabber than ever, began to lay aside something for himself.

He knew now definitely that he would never be what the world calls a success, that the local editor would never interview him and the town council would never name a street after him. But at least he would have a place to sleep, something to eat and clothes wherewith to cover his nakedness. Without bitterness he understood that Brainerd, in advancing him to the post of assistant teller, had done all that generosity could do. The cells of his brain had closed. He could learn no more, could go no further.

Once again, only this time he was forty, he had saved a couple of thousand dollars, when Jerry, caught in the panic that followed the war, went broke. He too had a family, and he turned to his older brother for aid. And once again Pants responded to the need of his kin.

He was forty-three years old and looked sixty when a slick salesman persuaded him to invest fifty dollars a month of his salary in a Florida lot. He caught the boom at the beginning, and at its crest, yielding to the persuasion of Brainerd, he sold out for forty thousand dollars' cash.

"Lucky man," his employer congratulated him. "You can leave it right here in the bank and get sixteen hundred dollars a year, or I'll find you some first-class mortgages that will net you six percent. Think it over."

"I will," promised the dazed Pants.

He stayed awake all that night pondering his good fortune, and the more he thought about it, the less important it seemed. Back in 1890, forty thousand had stood for affluence; today it stood for two expensive cars. Twenty-four hundred dollars a year. No yachts on that income; no suites at a big hotel; no private cars in which to tour the Rockies.

He read again two letters recently received. Mary stated that Tom was doing well; Jerry announced that success had finally and permanently come to him. This money which he had received had no duty-strings attached to it. He made his wild incredible plans that were to surprise a nation.

"You ought to take a little trip," advised Brainerd the next morning.

"I think I will," said Pants. "Could I have seven days off?"

"Take seven months," offered Brainerd.

Pants shook his head. "Seven days is all I want."

"Stubborn old cuss," said Brainerd to the cashier. The fact that Brainerd always referred to the younger man as though he were older characterizes Pants better than I can.

Pants went home. On the way he stopped at the Western Union office and wrote out telegrams to five New York newspapers.

Save for their addresses, they were all alike.

"Editor of the ——,
"New York City.

"James (Pants) Regan, of this city, has decided to be a millionaire for one week and in pursuit of this desire will arrive in New York City on Monday next on a special train. Mr. Regan will have engaged a suite of rooms at the Fitz, and will be glad to receive your reporters.

Signed, James (Pants) Regan."

The town went wild with excitement when the New York editors wired the local correspondents to get the dope on Pants Regan.

Oh, dreams come true! The local editor himself interviewed his famous fellow townsman and printed two columns of Pants Regan's plans. It was time, said Pants, that their thriving little city produced a live one who could show New York how a gentleman shed his jack. Yes, sir, it was all true; special train, palatial hotel suite, boxes at the theaters, everything. Mr. Pants Regan would be gratified if the local paper chose to send a correspondent with him.

"There'll be no job waiting for you here, Pants," warned Mr. Brainerd. "The bank can't afford to get mixed up with crazy notoriety like this."

"Working for the bank never got you in the New York papers," said Pants defiantly. "Here's three syndicates want exclusive stories with photographs. Anyway, they pay day-laborers big dough now, and I can easily learn to drive a motor-truck."

"You'd better," said Brainerd grimly.

Two thousand people gathered at the station and cheered Pants Regan as his special train —cost, twenty-five hundred dollars—steamed away for New York. There were two local reporters and eight New York correspondents on the train, all of them deeply appreciative of the champagne with which the car was stocked. Additional thousands gathered at each station to cheer Pants.

Oh, the glory of it! What did it matter if, when he made a speech, their cheers held the quality of jeers? They were making a racket, weren't they? And they scrambled for his gold pieces just as anxiously as they would have fought for the largesse of an Astor.

Fame? Who dared say it wasn't? Who knew the difference between notoriety and fame? As well one as another.

The reception in New York; the gorgeous suite; the marvelous dinner-parties; the applause in the theaters when he was discovered in a box; his pictures in the papers; the headlines, and the stories underneath that described his every action, that quoted his every word. The minister who preached a mid-week sermon denouncing his extravagance, and the ponderous editorial writers who said that he should be restrained from making a fool of himself.

Pants Regan alighted from the day coach at his home-town station seven days after his arrival in New York. Of his forty thousand dollars he had left exactly two hundred and ten. He stepped into a garage near-by and said to the proprietor, "I want to learn how to drive a truck. Will you give me a job?"

"You're right I will," said the proprietor. "Twenty dollars a week as helper and thirty when you get your driver's license. And glad I am to have working for me a lad with some gumption. Tell me now, was it honest-to-God champagne that the girl took the bath in at the party you gave?"

Shamokin County is ashamed of its one citizen who made the front pages of the New York newspapers. But Pants Regan never appears upon the streets without eyes following him, and a buzz of comment flowing in his wake. He looks twenty-five; his eyes are merry and his walk is the lithe stride of youth. As he says himself, "I was alive for a while."

Respectable people point at him and say to strangers, "He was a perfectly steady man until he came into some money and went suddenly insane."

Myself, I think he went suddenly sane.



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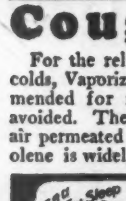
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Footprints in the Jungle (*Continued from page 31*)

twenty years," Gaze went on. "I knew she was living somewhere in the F. M. S. but it was a surprise when I took this job and came here to run across her in the club just as I had up in Selantan so many years before. Of course she's an elderly woman now and she's changed out of all recognition. It was rather a shock to see her with a grown-up daughter—it made me realize how the time had passed."

"Did you recognize her when you saw her again?" I asked.

"Well, I did and I didn't. At the first glance I thought she reminded me of someone I knew. But the moment she spoke to me I remembered at once. I remembered the dry twinkle in her eyes and the crisp sound of her voice. There was something in her voice that seemed to mean: you're a bit of a fool, my lad, but you're not a bad sort and upon my soul I rather like you."

"That's a good deal to read into the sound of a voice," I smiled.

"She came up to me in the club and shook hands with me. 'How do you do, Major Gaze. Do you remember me?' she said.

" 'Of course I do.'

" 'A lot of water has passed under the bridge since we met last. We're none of us as young as we were. Have you seen Theo?'

"For a moment I couldn't think who she meant. I suppose I looked rather stupid, because she gave a little smile, that ironical, quizzing smile that now I recalled so well, and explained.

" 'I married Theo, you know. It seemed the best thing. I was lonely and he wanted it.'

" 'I heard you married him,' I said. 'I hope you've been very happy.'

" 'Oh, very. Theo's a perfect duck. He'll be here in a minute. He'll be so glad to see you.'

"I wondered. I should have thought I was the last person Theo would wish to see. I shouldn't have thought she would wish it very much, either. But women are funny."

"Why shouldn't she wish to see you?" I asked.

"I'm coming to that later," said Gaze. "Then Theo turned up. I don't know why I call him Theo; I never called him anything but Cartwright, I never thought of him as anything but Cartwright. Theo was a shock. You know what he looks like now; I remembered him as a curly-headed youngster, very fresh and clean-looking; he was always neat and dapper, he had a good figure and he held himself easily. Now I come to think of it he wasn't bad-looking, not in a big, massive way, but graceful, you know, and lithe. When I saw this bowed, cadaverous, bald-headed old fellow with spectacles I could hardly believe my eyes. I shouldn't have known him from Adam. He seemed pleased to see me, or at least interested; he wasn't effusive, but he'd always been on the quiet side and I didn't expect him to be.

" 'Are you surprised to find us here?' he asked me.

" 'Well, I hadn't the faintest notion where you were.'

" 'We've kept track of your movements more or less. We've seen your name in the paper every now and then. You must come out one day and have a look at our place. We've been settled there a good many years, and I suppose we shall stay there till we go home for good. Have you ever been back to Alor Lipis?'

" 'No, I haven't,' I said.

" 'It was a nice little place. I'm told it's grown. I've never been back.'

" 'It hasn't got the pleasantest recollections for us,' said Mrs. Cartwright.

"I asked them if they would have a drink and we called the boy. I dare say you noticed that Mrs. Cartwright likes her liquor; I don't mean that she gets tight or anything like that, but she drinks her stingah like a man.

"I couldn't help looking at them with a certain amount of curiosity. They seemed perfectly happy, I gathered that they hadn't done at all badly, and I found out later that they were quite well off. They were on the best of terms with one another. You know how jolly it is to see two people who've been married a great many years obviously better pleased with their own company than anyone else's. And they were both of them devoted to Olive and very proud of her, Theo especially."

"Although she was only his stepdaughter," I said.

"Although she was only his stepdaughter," answered Gaze. "You'd think that she would have taken his name. But she hadn't. She called him Daddy, of course—he was the only father she had ever known—but she signed her letters Olive Bronson."

"What was Bronson like, by the way?"

"Bronson? He was a great big fellow, very hearty, with a loud voice and a bellowing laugh, beefy, you know, and a fine athlete. There was not very much to him but he was as straight as a die. He had a red face and red hair. Now I come to think of it, I remember that I never saw a man sweat as much as he did. Water just poured off him and when he played tennis he always used to take a towel on the court with him."

"It doesn't sound very attractive."

"He was a handsome chap. He was always very fit. He was keen on that. He hadn't much to talk about but rubber and games, tennis, you know, and golf and shooting; and I don't suppose he read a book from year's end to year's end. He was the typical public-school boy. He was about thirty-five when I first knew him, but he had the mind of a boy of eighteen. You know how many fellows when they come out East seem to stop growing.

"But he was no fool," Gaze went on. "He knew his work from A to Z. His estate was one of the best managed in the country and he knew how to handle his labor. He was a good sort, and if he did get on your nerves a little you couldn't help liking him. He was generous with his money, and always ready to do anybody a good turn. That's how Cartwright happened to turn up in the first instance."

"Did the Bronsons get on well together?"

"Oh, yes, I think so. I'm sure they did. He was good-natured and she was very jolly and gay in those days. She was very outspoken, you know. She can be very funny when she likes even now, but there's generally a sting lurking in the joke; when she was a young woman and married to Bronson, it was just pure fun. There was something so open and frank and careless about her that you didn't care what she said to you.

"They seemed very happy. Their estate was about five miles from Alor Lipis and they used to ride in most evenings about five. They bucked things up the moment they arrived. We used to have very jolly times in that little club.

"One day Mrs. Bronson told us that they were expecting a friend to stay with them and a few days later they brought Cartwright along. It appeared that he was an old friend of Bronson's; they'd been at school together. Rubber was not very good at that time and a lot of fellows had lost their jobs. Cartwright was one of them. He'd been out of work for the greater part of a year and he hadn't anything to fall back on. In those days planters were even worse paid than they are now and a man had to be very lucky to put by something for a rainy day.

"Cartwright had gone to Singapore, they all go there when there's a slump, you know; it's awful then. I've seen it, I've known of planters sleeping in the street because they hadn't the price of a night's lodging, I've known them stop strangers outside the Europe and ask for a dollar to get a meal, and I think Cartwright had had a pretty rotten time.

"At last he wrote to Bronson and asked him if he couldn't do something for him. Bronson asked him to come and stay till things got better; at least it would be free board and

lodging and Cartwright jumped at the chance, but Bronson had to send him the money to pay his railway fare. When Cartwright arrived at Alor Lipis he hadn't ten cents in his pocket. Bronson had a little money of his own, two or three hundred a year, I think, and though his salary had been cut, he had kept his job, so that he was better off than most planters. When Cartwright came Mrs. Bronson told him that he was to look upon the place as his home and stay as long as he liked."

"It was very nice of her, wasn't it?" I remarked.

"Very."

Gaze lighted himself another cheroot and filled his glass. It was very still and but for the occasional croak of the chickchack the silence was intense. We seemed to be alone in the tropical night and heaven only knows how far from the habitations of men.

"What sort of a man was Cartwright at that time?" I asked. "Younger, of course, and you told me rather nice-looking, but in himself?"

"Well, to tell you the truth I never paid much attention to him. He was pleasant and unassuming. He's very quiet now as I dare say you noticed; well, he wasn't exactly lively then; but he was perfectly inoffensive. He was fond of reading and he played the piano rather nicely. You never minded having him about, he was never in the way, but you never bothered very much about him. He danced well and the women rather liked that, but he also played billiards quite decently and he wasn't bad at tennis. He fell into our little groove very naturally. I wouldn't say that he ever became wildly popular, but everybody liked him.

"Of course we were sorry for him, as one is for a man who's down and out, but there was nothing we could do, and, well, we just accepted him.

"He did everything he could to get something to do, but he had no luck; the fact is, there were no jobs going, and sometimes he seemed rather depressed about it. He was with the Bronsons for over a year. I remember his saying to me once:

" 'After all, I can't live with them forever. They've been most awfully good to me, but there are limits.'

" 'I should think the Bronsons would be very glad to have you,' I said. 'It's not very gay on a rubber estate, and as far as your food and drink go, it must make very little difference if you're there or not.' "

Gaze stopped once more and looked at me with a sort of hesitation.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"I'm afraid I'm telling you this story very badly," he said. "I seem to be just rambling on. I'm not a novelist, I'm a policeman, and I'm just telling you the facts as I saw them at the time; and from my point of view all the circumstances are important; it's important, I mean, to realize what sort of people they were."

"Of course. Fire away."

"I remember someone, a woman, I think it was, the doctor's wife, asking Mrs. Bronson if she didn't get tired sometimes of having a stranger in the house.

" 'Oh, no,' she said, 'Theo's no trouble.' She turned to her husband. 'We like having him, don't we?'

" 'He's all right,' said Bronson.

" 'What does he do with himself all day?'

" 'Oh, I don't know,' said Mrs. Bronson. 'He walks round the estate with Reggie sometimes, and he shoots a little. He talks to me.'

" 'He's always glad to make himself useful,' said Bronson. 'The other day when I had a go of fever, he took over my work and I just lay in bed and had a good time.' "

"Hadn't the Bronsons any children?" I asked.

"No," Gaze answered. "I don't know why, they could well have afforded it."

Gaze leaned back in his chair. He took off his glasses and wiped them. They were very strong and hideously distorted his eyes. Without them he wasn't so homely. The chickchack on the ceiling gave its strangely human cry. It was like the cackle of an idiot child.

"Bronson was killed," said Gaze suddenly.

"Killed?"

"Yes, murdered. I shall never forget that night. We'd been playing tennis, Mrs. Bronson and the doctor's wife, Theo Cartwright and I; and then we played bridge. Cartwright had been off his game and when we sat down at the bridge table Mrs. Bronson said to him:

" 'Well, Theo, if you play bridge as rottenly as you played tennis we shall lose our shirts.'

"We'd just had a drink, but she called the boy and ordered another round.

" 'Put that down your throat,' she said to him, 'and don't call without top honors and an outside trick.'

"Bronson hadn't turned up. He'd gone in to Kabulong to get the money to pay his coolies their wages and was to come along to the club when he got back.

" 'Reggie can cut in when he turns up,' said Mrs. Bronson.

" 'He's late, isn't he?' said the doctor's wife.

" 'Very. He said he wouldn't get back in time for tennis, but would be here for a rubber. I have a suspicion that he went to the club at Kabulong instead of coming straight home and is having drinks, the ruffian.'

"We sat by ourselves in the card-room and we could hear the crowd in the billiard-room talking and laughing. They were all on the merry side. It was getting on to Christmas and we were all letting ourselves go a little.

"I remembered afterwards that when we sat down the doctor's wife asked Mrs. Bronson if she wasn't tired.

" 'Not a bit,' she said. 'Why should I be?'

"I didn't know why she flushed.

" 'I was afraid the tennis might have been too much for you,' said the doctor's wife.

" 'Oh, no,' answered Mrs. Bronson, a trifle abruptly, I thought, as though she didn't want to discuss the matter.

"I did not know what they meant, and indeed it was not till later that I remembered the incident.

"We played three or four rubbers and still Bronson did not turn up.

" 'I wonder what's happened to him,' said his wife. 'I can't think why he should be so late.'

"Cartwright was always silent, but this evening he had hardly opened his mouth. I thought he was tired and asked him what he'd been doing.

" 'Nothing very much,' he said. 'I went out after tiffin to shoot pigeon.'

" 'Did you have any luck?' I asked.

" 'Oh, I got half a dozen. They were very shy.'

"But now he said: 'If Reggie got back late, I dare say he thought it wasn't worth while to come here. I expect he's had a bath and when we get in we shall find him asleep.'

" 'It's a good long ride from Kabulong,' said the doctor's wife.

" 'He doesn't take the road, you know,' Mrs. Bronson explained. 'He takes the short cut through the jungle.'

" 'Can he get along on his bicycle?' I asked.

" 'Oh, yes, it's a very good track. It saves about a couple of miles.'

"We had just started another rubber when the bar-boy came in and said that there was a police sergeant outside who wanted to speak to me. I told the boy I'd come and I finished playing the hand. Then I got up.

" 'I won't be a minute,' I said. 'Deal for me, will you?' I added to Cartwright.

"I went out and found the sergeant with two Malays waiting for me on the steps. I asked him what the devil he wanted. You can imagine my consternation when he told me that the Malays had come to the police station and said there was a white man lying dead on the path that led through the jungle to Kabulong. I immediately thought of Bronson.

" 'Dead?' I cried.

" 'Yes, shot. Shot through the head. A white man with red hair.'



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"Then I knew it could only be Reggie Bronson and indeed one of them naming his estate said he had recognized him as the *Tuan*.'

"It was an awful shock. And there was Mrs. Bronson in the card-room waiting impatiently for me to sort my cards and make a bid. For a moment I really didn't know what to do. I was frightfully upset. It was dreadful to give her such a terrible and unexpected blow without a word of preparation, but I found myself quite unable to think of any way to soften it. I told the sergeant and the coolies to wait and went back into the club. I tried to pull myself together. As I entered the card-room Mrs. Bronson said:

" 'You've been an awful long time.' Then she caught sight of my face. 'Is anything the matter?' I saw her clench her fists and go white. You'd have thought she had a presentiment of evil.

" 'Something dreadful has happened,' I said, and my throat was all closed up so that my voice sounded even to me hoarse and uncanny. 'There's been an accident. Your husband's been wounded.'

"She gave a long gasp, it was not exactly a scream, it reminded me oddly of a piece of silk torn in two.

" 'Wounded?'

"She leaped to her feet and with her eyes starting from her head stared at Cartwright. The effect on him was ghastly, he fell back in his chair and he went as white as death.

" 'Very, very badly, I'm afraid,' I added.

"I knew that I must tell her the truth, and tell it then, but I couldn't bring myself to tell it all at once.

" 'Is he'—her lips trembled so that she could hardly form the words—'is he—conscious?'

"I looked at her for a moment without answering. I'd have given a thousand pounds not to have to.

" 'No, I'm afraid he isn't.'

"Mrs. Bronson stared at me as though she were trying to see right into my brain.

" 'Is he dead?'

" 'Yes, he was dead when they found him.'

"Mrs. Bronson collapsed into her chair and burst into tears. 'Oh, my God!' she muttered. 'Oh, my God!'

"The doctor's wife went to her and put her arms round her. Mrs. Bronson with her face in her hands swayed to and fro weeping hysterically. Cartwright, with that livid face, sat quite still, his mouth open, and stared at her. You might have thought he was turned to stone.

" 'Oh, my dear, my dear,' said the doctor's wife, 'you must try and pull yourself together.' Then, turning to me, 'Get her a glass of water and fetch Harry.'

"Harry was her husband and he was playing billiards. I went in and told him what had happened.

" 'A glass of water nothing!' he said. 'What she wants is a good long peg of brandy.'

"We took it in to her and forced her to drink it and gradually the violence of her emotion exhausted itself. In a few minutes the doctor's wife was able to take her into the ladies' lavatory so that she might wash her face. I had made up my mind now what had better be done. I could see that Cartwright wasn't good for much; he was all to pieces. I could understand that it was a fearful shock to him, for after all Bronson was his greatest friend and had done everything in the world for him.

" 'You look as though you'd be all the better for a drop of brandy yourself, old man,' I said to him.

"He made an effort.

" 'It's shaken me, you know,' he said. 'I . . . I didn't . . .' He stopped as though his mind were wandering; he was still fearfully pale; he took out a packet of cigarets and struck a match, and his hand was shaking. 'Yes, I'll have a brandy.'

" 'Boy!' I shouted, and then to Cartwright: 'Now are you fit to take Mrs. Bronson home?'

" 'Oh, yes,' he answered.

" 'That's good. The doctor and I will go along with the coolies and some police to where the body is.'

" 'Will you bring him back to the bungalow?'

" 'I think he'd better be taken straight to the mortuary,' said the doctor before I could answer. 'I shall have to do a P. M.'

"When Mrs. Bronson, now so much calmer that I was amazed, came back, I told her what I suggested. The doctor's wife, kind woman, offered to go with her and spend the night at the bungalow, but Mrs. Bronson would not hear of it. She said she would be perfectly all right and when the doctor's wife insisted—you know how bent some people are on forcing their kindness on those in trouble—she turned on her almost fiercely.

" 'No, no, I must be alone,' she said. 'I really must. And Theo will be there.'

"They got into the trap. Theo took the reins and they drove off. We started after them, the doctor and I, while the sergeant and the coolies followed. I had sent my *syce* to the police station with instructions to send two men to the place where the body was lying. We soon passed Mrs. Bronson and Cartwright.

" 'All right?' I called.

" 'Yes,' he answered.

"We had to drive along the road that passed Bronson's estate and two miles farther before we came to the short cut to Kabulong along which poor Bronson had been killed. The Malays had been coming back from Kabulong when they found him. Fortunately the moon was full and it was almost as light as day. For some time the doctor and I drove without saying a word; we were both of us deeply shocked. I was worried as well. Somehow or other I'd got to find the murderers and I foresaw that it would be no easy matter.

" 'Do you suppose it was gang robbery?' said the doctor at last.

"He might have been reading my thoughts.

" 'I don't think there's a doubt of it,' I answered. 'They knew he'd gone into Kabulong to get the wages and lay in wait for him on the way back. Of course he should never have come alone through the jungle when everyone knew he had a large sum with him.'

" 'He'd done it for years,' said the doctor. 'And he's not the only one.'

" 'I know. The question is, how we're going to get hold of the fellows that did it.'

" 'You don't think the two coolies who say they found him could have had anything to do with it?'

" 'No. They wouldn't have the nerve. I think a pair of Chinks might think out a trick like that, but I don't believe Malays would. They'd be much too frightened. Of course we'll keep an eye on them; we shall soon see if they seem to have any money to fling about.'

" 'It's awful for Mrs. Bronson,' said the doctor. 'It would have been bad enough at any time, but now she's going to have a baby——'

" 'I didn't know that,' I said.

" 'No, for some reason she wanted to keep it dark. She was rather funny about it, I thought.'

"I recollected then that little passage between Mrs. Bronson and the doctor's wife. I understood why that good woman had been so anxious that Mrs. Bronson should not overtire herself.

" 'It's strange her having a baby after being married so many years.'

" 'It happens, you know. But it was a surprise to her. When first she came to see me and I told her what was the matter she fainted, and then she began to cry. I should have thought she'd be as pleased as Punch. She told me that Bronson didn't like children and he'd be awfully bored at the idea, and she made me promise to say nothing about it till she had had a chance of breaking it to him gradually.'

"I reflected for a moment.

" 'He was the kind of breezy, hearty cove whom you'd expect to be as keen as mustard on having kids.'

" 'You never can tell. Some people are very selfish and just don't want the bother.'

" 'Well, how did he take it when she did tell

him? Wasn't he rather bucked?' I asked.

"'I don't know that she ever told him. Though she could not have waited much longer; unless I'm very much mistaken she ought to be confined in about five months.'

"'Poor devil,' I said. 'You know, I've got a notion that he'd have been most awfully pleased to know.'

"We drove in silence for the rest of the way and at last came to the point at which Bronson, riding along the path, should have found the road. Here we stopped and in a minute or two my trap in which were the police sergeant and the two Malays came up. We took the head-lamps to light us on our way. I left the doctor's *syce* to look after the ponies and told him that when the policemen came they were to follow the path till they found us. The two coolies, carrying the lamps, walked ahead and we followed them.

"It was a fairly broad track, wide enough for a small cart to pass, and before the road was built it had been the highway between Kabulong and Alor Lipis. It was firm to the foot and good walking. The surface here and there was sandy and in places you could see quite plainly the trace of Bronson's bicycle that he had left on his way into Kabulong early in the day. We walked twenty minutes, I should think, in single file, and on a sudden the coolies, with a cry, stopped sharply.

"There, in the middle of the pathway, lighted fitfully by the lamps the coolies carried, lay Bronson; he had fallen over his bicycle and lay across it in an ungainly heap. I was too shocked to speak, and I think the doctor was too. But in our silence he din of the jungle was deafening; those confounded cicadas and the bullfrogs were making enough row to wake the dead. Even under ordinary circumstances the noise of the jungle at night always seems to me uncanny. But just then, believe me, it was terrifying. That poor fellow lay dead and all round him the restless life of the jungle pursued its indifferent and ferocious course.

"He was lying face downwards. The sergeant and the coolies looked at me as though awaiting an order. I was a young fellow then and I'm afraid I felt a little frightened. I suppose we all have our little squeamishnesses; you know, I've always had a horrible distaste for touching dead bodies.

"'It's Bronson, all right,' I said.

"The doctor—by George, it's lucky for me he was there—the doctor bent down and turned the head. The sergeant directed the lamp on the dead face.

"'My Lord, half his head's been shot away!' I cried.

"'Yes.'

"The doctor stood up straight and wiped his hands on the leaves of a tree.

"'Is he quite dead?' I asked.

"'Oh, yes. Death must have been instantaneous. Whoever shot him must have fired at pretty close range.'

"'How long has he been dead, d'you think?'

"'Oh, I don't know, several hours.'

"'He would have passed here about five o'clock, I suppose, if he was expecting to get to the club for a rubber at six.'

"'There's no sign of any struggle,' said the doctor.

"'No, there wouldn't be. He was shot as he was riding along.'

"I looked at the body for a little while I couldn't help thinking how short a time ago it was since Bronson, noisy and loud-voiced, had been so full of hearty life.

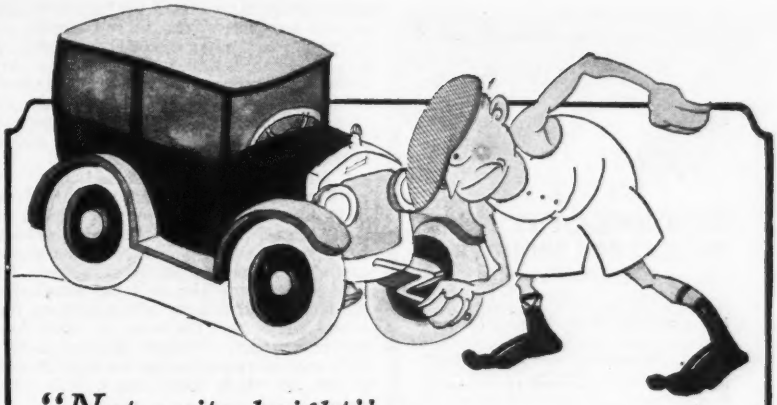
"'You haven't forgotten that he had the coolies' wages on him?' said the doctor.

"'No, we had better search him.'

"'Shall we turn him over?'

"'Wait a minute. Let us just have a look at the ground first.'

"I took the lamp and as carefully as I could looked all about me. Just where he had fallen the sandy pathway was trodden and confused; there were our footprints and the footprints of the coolies who had just found him. I walked back two or three paces and then saw



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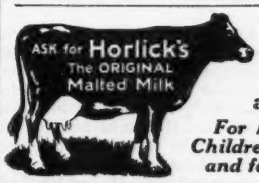
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quite clearly the mark of his bicycle wheels; he had been riding straight and steadily. I followed it to the spot where he had fallen, to just before that, rather, and there saw very distinctly the prints on each side of the wheels of his heavy boots. He had evidently stopped there and put his feet to the ground; then he'd started off again, there was a great wobble of the wheel, and he'd crashed.

" 'Now let's search him,' I said.

"The doctor and the sergeant turned the body over and one of the coolies dragged the bicycle away. They laid Bronson on his back. I supposed he would have had the money partly in notes and partly in silver. The silver would have been in a bag attached to the bicycle and a hasty glance told me that it was not there. The notes he would have put in a wallet. I turned out the pockets; they were all empty except the right trousers pocket, in which there was a little small change.

" 'Didn't he always wear a watch?' asked the doctor.

" 'Yes, of course he did.'

"I remembered that he wore the chain through the buttonhole in the lapel of his coat and the watch and some seals and things in his handkerchief pocket. But watch and chain were gone.

" 'Well, there's not much doubt now, is there?' I said.

"It was clear that he had been attacked by gang robbers who knew he had a good sum of money on him and after killing him they had stripped him of everything. I suddenly remembered the footprints that proved that for a moment he had stood still. I saw exactly how it had been done. One of them had stopped him on some pretext and then, just as he started off again, another, slipping out of the jungle behind him, had emptied the two barrels of a gun into his head.

" 'Well,' I said to the doctor, 'it's up to me to catch them, and I'll tell you what, it'll be a real pleasure to me to see them hanged.'

"Of course there was an inquest. Mrs. Bronson gave evidence, but she had nothing to say that we did not know already. Bronson had left the bungalow about eleven, he was to have tiffin at Kabulong and was to be back between five and six. He asked her not to wait for him; he said he would just put the money in the safe and come to the club.

"Cartwright confirmed this. He had lunched alone with Mr. Bronson and after a smoke he had gone out with his gun to shoot pigeon. He got in about five, a little before, perhaps, had a bath and changed to play tennis. He was shooting not far from the place where Bronson was killed, but never heard a shot. That, of course, meant nothing; what with the cicadas and the frogs and the other sounds of the jungle he would have had to be very near to hear anything; and besides, Cartwright was probably back in the bungalow before Bronson was killed.

"We traced Bronson's movements. He had lunched at the club, he had got money at the bank just before it closed, had gone back to the club and had one more drink and then started off on his bicycle. He had crossed the river by the ferry; the ferryman remembered distinctly seeing him, but was positive that no one else with a bicycle crossed. That looked as though the murderers were not following, but lying in wait for him. He rode along the main road for a couple of miles and then took the path which was a short cut.

"It looked as though he had been killed by men who knew his habits, and suspicion, of course, fell immediately on the coolies on his estate. We examined them all—pretty carefully—but there was not a scrap of evidence to connect any of them with the crime.

"There were a few bad characters among the Chinese at Alor Lipis and I had them looked up. But somehow I didn't think it was the work of the Chinese; I had a feeling that Chinese would have used revolvers and not a shotgun. Anyhow, I could find out nothing there.

"So then we offered a reward of a thousand dollars to anyone who put us in the way of discovering the murderers. The reward brightened the interest of my police and I knew they would use every means they had to bring the criminals to trial.

"But it was strange, nothing happened; the reward seemed to tempt no one. I cast my net a little wider. There were two or three *kampongs* along the road and I wondered if the murderers were there; I saw the headmen, but got no help from them. It was not that they would tell me nothing; I was sure that they had nothing to tell. I talked to the bad hats, but there was absolutely nothing to connect them with the murder. There was not the shadow of a clue.

" 'Very well, my lads,' I said to myself as I drove back to Alor Lipis, 'there's no hurry; the rope won't spoil by keeping.'

"The scoundrels had got away with a considerable sum. The itch to spend those ill-gotten dollars would grow more and more intolerable till at last it could be resisted no longer. I would go about my business, but I meant never to relax my watch, and one day, sooner or later, my time must come.

"Cartwright took Mrs. Bronson down to Singapore. The company Bronson had worked for asked him if he would care to take Bronson's place, but he said, very naturally, that he didn't like the idea of it; so they put another man in and told Cartwright that he could have the job that Bronson's successor had vacated. It was the management of the estate that Cartwright lives on now. He moved in at once.

"Four months after this Olive was born at Singapore, and a few months later, when Bronson had been dead just over a year, Cartwright and Mrs. Bronson were married. I was surprised; but on thinking it over I couldn't help confessing that it was very natural. After the trouble Mrs. Bronson had leaned much on Cartwright and he had arranged everything for her; she must have been lonely, and rather lost, and I dare say she was grateful for his kindness, he did behave like a brick; and so far as he was concerned I imagined he was sorry for her, it was a dreadful position for a woman, she had nowhere to go, and all they'd gone through must have been a tie between them. There was every reason for them to marry.

"It looked as though Bronson's murderers would never be caught, for that plan of mine did not work; there was no one in the district who spent more money than he could account for, and if anyone had that hoard buried away somewhere under his floor he was showing a self-control that was superhuman. A year had passed and to all intents and purposes the thing was forgotten. Could anyone be so prudent as after so long not to let a little money dribble out? It was incredible.

"At last I gave it up. And then a Chinaman was caught trying to pawn poor Bronson's watch.

"I told you that Bronson's watch and chain had been taken, and of course Mrs. Bronson was able to give us a fairly accurate description of it. It was a half-hunter, of a well-known make; there was a gold chain, three or four seals and a sovereign purse. The pawnbroker was an astute fellow and when the Chinaman brought the watch in he recognized it at once. On some pretext he kept the man waiting and sent for a policeman. The man was arrested and immediately brought to me.

"I greeted him like a long-lost brother. I was never so pleased to see anyone in my life. I have no feeling about criminals, you know; I'm rather sorry for them, because they're playing a game in which their opponents hold all the aces and kings; but when I catch one it gives me a little thrill of satisfaction, like bringing off a neat finesse at bridge. At last the mystery was going to be cleared up, for if the Chinaman had not committed the murder himself we were pretty sure through him to trace the murderers. I beamed on him.

"I asked him to account for his possession

of the watch. He said he had bought it from a man he did not know. That was very thin. I explained the circumstances briefly and told him he would be charged with murder. I meant to frighten him and I did. He said then that he'd found the watch.

" 'Found it?' I said. 'Fancy that. Where?'

"His answer staggered me—he said he'd found it in the jungle; I laughed at him; I asked him if he thought watches were likely to be left lying about in the jungle; then he said he'd been coming along the pathway that led from Kabulong to Alor Lipis, and had gone into the jungle and had caught sight of something gleaming and there was the watch. That was odd. Why should he have said he'd found the watch just there? It was either true or excessively astute.

"I asked him where the chain and the seals were, and he produced them immediately. I'd got him scared, and he was pale and shaking; he was a knock-kneed little fellow and I should have been a fool not to see that I hadn't got hold of the murderer there. But his terror suggested that he knew something.

"I asked him when he'd found the watch.

" 'Yesterday,' he said.

"I asked him what he was doing on the short cut from Kabulong to Alor Lipis. He said that he'd been working in Singapore and had gone to Kabulong because his father was ill and now was come to Alor Lipis to work. He gave me the name of the man with whom he had worked in Singapore and the name of the man who had engaged him at Alor Lipis. All he said seemed plausible and could so easily be verified that it was hardly likely to be false.

"Of course it occurred to me that if he had found the watch as he said, it must have been lying in the jungle for more than a year. It could hardly be in very good condition. I tried to open it, but could not. The pawnbroker had come to the police-station and was waiting in the next room. Luckily he was also something of a watchmaker. I sent for him and asked him to look at the watch; when he opened it he gave a little whistle; the works were thick with rust.

" 'This watch no good,' he said, shaking his head. 'Him never go now.'

"I asked him what had put it in such a state and without a word from me he said that it had been long exposed to wet. For the moral effect I had the prisoner put in a cell and I sent for his employer. I also sent a wire to Kabulong and to Singapore. While I waited I did my best to put two and two together. I was inclined to believe the man's story.

"But if he really had found the watch where he said, someone had thrown it there. Now that was a funny thing to do. Even if the murderers had thought the watch a dangerous thing to possess, one would have expected them to melt down the gold case.

"Of course there was the possibility that they had plunged into the jungle and having dropped the watch in their hurry had been afraid to go back and look for it. I did not think that very likely; the Malays are used to keeping things tucked away in their *sarongs*, and the Chinese have pockets in their coats. Besides, the moment they got into the jungle they knew there was no hurry; they probably waited and divided the swag then and there.

"In a few minutes the man I had sent for came to the police station and confirmed what the prisoner had said and in an hour I got an answer from Kabulong. The police had seen his father, who told them that the boy had gone to Alor Lipis to get a job with a carpenter. So far everything he had said seemed true.

"I had him brought in again, and told him I was going to take him to the place where he said he had found the watch and he must show me the exact spot. I handcuffed him to a policeman, though it was hardly necessary, and took a couple of men. We drove out to where the track joined the road and walked along it; within five yards of the place where Bronson was killed the Chinaman stopped.

" 'Here,' he said.

"He pointed to the jungle and we followed him in. We went in about ten yards and he pointed to a chink between two large boulders and said that he found the watch there. It could only have been by the merest chance that he had noticed it, and if he really had found it there it looked very much as though someone had put it there to hide it."

Gaze stopped and gave me a reflective look.

"What would you have thought then?" he asked.

"I don't know," I answered.

"Well, I'll tell you what I thought—I thought that if the watch was there the money might be there too. It seemed worth while having a look. Of course to look for something in the jungle makes looking for a needle in a bundle of hay a drawing-room pastime. I couldn't help that. I released the Chinaman and set him to work, I set my three men to work, and I started in myself.

"We made a line—there were five of us—and we searched from the road for fifty yards on each side of the place at which Bronson was murdered and for a hundred yards in. We went over the ground foot by foot. We routed among dead leaves and peered in bushes, we looked inside boulders and in the hollows of trees. I knew it was a foolish thing to do, for the chances against us were a thousand to one; my only hope was that anyone who had just committed a murder would be rattled and if he wanted to hide anything would hide it quickly; he would choose the first obvious hiding-place that offered itself.

"We worked on. I began to grow tired and cross. We were sweating like pigs. I had a maddening thirst and nothing in the world to drink. At last I came to the conclusion that we must give it up as a bad job, for that day at least, when suddenly the Chinaman—he must have had sharp eyes, that young man—uttered a guttural cry.

"He stooped down and from under the winding root of a tree drew out a messy, moldering, stinking thing. It was a pocketbook that had been out in the rain for a year, that had been eaten by ants and beetles and Lord knows what, that was sodden and foul, but it was a pocketbook all right, Bronson's, and inside were the shapeless mushed-up, fetid remains of the Singapore notes.

"There was still the silver and I was convinced that it was hidden somewhere about, but I was not going to bother about that. I had found out something very important: whoever had murdered Bronson had made no money out of it.

"Do you remember my telling you that I had noticed the print of Bronson's feet on each side of the broad line of the pneumatic tire, where he had stopped and presumably spoken to someone? He was a heavy man and the prints were well marked. He hadn't just put his feet on the soft sand and taken them off, but must have stopped at least for a minute or two. My explanation was that he had stopped to chat with a Malay or a Chinaman, but the more I thought of it the less I liked it.

"Why the devil should he? Bronson wanted to get home, and though a jovial chap, he certainly was not hail-fellow-well-met with the natives. His relations towards them were those of master and servants. Those footprints had always puzzled me. And now the truth flashed across me. Whoever had murdered Bronson hadn't murdered him to rob, and if he'd stopped to talk with someone it could only be with a friend. I knew at last who the murderer was."

I have always thought the detective story a most diverting and ingenious variety of fiction, and have regretted that I never had the skill to write one, but I have read a good many, and I flatter myself it is rarely that I have not solved the mystery before it was disclosed to me; and now for some time I had foreseen what Gaze was going to say, but when at last he said it I confess that it gave me notwithstanding somewhat of a shock.

"The man he met was Cartwright. Cartwright was pigeon shooting. He stopped and asked him what sport he had had, and as he



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rode on Cartwright raised his gun and discharged both barrels into his head. Cartwright took the money and the watch in order to make it look like the work of gang robbers and hurriedly hid them in the jungle, then made his way along the edge till he got to the road, went back to the bungalow, changed into his tennis things and drove in with Mrs. Bronson to the club.

"I remembered how badly he'd played tennis, and how he'd collapsed when, in order to break the news more gently to Mrs. Bronson, I said Bronson was wounded and not dead. If he was only wounded he might have been able to speak. By George, I bet that was a bad moment. The child was Cartwright's. Look at Olive: why, you saw the likeness yourself. The doctor said that Mrs. Bronson was upset when he told her she was going to have a baby, and made him promise not to tell Bronson. Why? Because Bronson knew that he couldn't be the father of the child."

"Do you think Mrs. Bronson knew what Cartwright had done?" I asked.

"I'm sure of it. When I look back on her behavior that evening at the club I'm convinced of it. She was upset, but not because Bronson was killed, she was upset because I told her he was wounded; when I confessed that he was dead when they found him she burst out crying, but from relief. I know that woman; look at that square chin of hers and tell me that she hasn't got the courage of the devil. She has a will of iron. She made Cartwright do it. She planned every detail and every move. He was completely under her influence; he is now."

"But do you mean to tell me that neither you nor anyone else ever suspected that there was anything between them?"

"Never. Never."

"If they were in love with one another and knew that she was going to have a baby, why didn't they just bolt?"

"How could they? It was Bronson who had the money; she hadn't a bean and neither had Cartwright. He was out of a job. Do you think he would have got another with that story round his neck? Bronson had taken him in when he was starving and he'd stolen his wife from him. They wouldn't have had a dog's chance. They couldn't afford to let the truth come out, their only chance was to get Bronson out of the way, and they got him out of the way."

"They might have thrown themselves on his mercy."

"Yes, but I think they were too ashamed. He'd been so good to them, he was such a decent chap, I don't think they had the heart to tell him the truth. They preferred to kill him."

There was a moment's silence while I reflected over what Gaze said.

"Well, what did you do about it?" I asked.

"Nothing What was there to do? What was the evidence? That the watch and the notes had been found? They might easily have been hidden by someone who was afterwards afraid to come and get them. The murderer might have been quite content to get away with the silver. The footprints? Bronson might have stopped to light a cigaret or there might have been a tree trunk across the path and he waited while the coolies he met there by chance moved it away. Who could prove that the child that a perfectly decent, respectable woman had had four months after her husband's death was not his child? No jury would have convicted Cartwright. I held my tongue and the Bronson murder was forgotten."

"I don't suppose the Cartwrights have forgotten," I suggested.

"I shouldn't be surprised. Human memory is astonishingly short and if you want my professional opinion I don't mind telling you that I don't believe remorse for a crime ever sits very heavily on a man when he's absolutely sure he'll never be found out."

I thought once more of the pair I had met that afternoon, the thin, elderly, bald man with gold-rimmed spectacles, and that white-haired, untidy woman with her frank speech and kindly, caustic smile. It was almost impossible to imagine that in the distant past they had been swayed by so turbulent a passion, for that alone made their behavior explicable, that it had brought them in the end to such a pass that they could see no other issue than a cruel and cold-blooded murder.

"Doesn't it make you feel a little uncomfortable to be with them?" I asked Gaze. "For without wishing to be censorious I'm bound to say that I don't think they can be very nice people."

"That's where you're wrong. They are very nice people; they're about the pleasantest people here. Mrs. Cartwright is a thoroughly good sort and a very amusing woman. It's my business to prevent crime and to catch the culprit when crime is committed, but I've known far too many criminals to think that on the whole they're worse than anybody else. A perfectly decent fellow may be driven by circumstances to commit a crime and if he's found out he's punished, but he may very well remain a perfectly decent fellow. Of course society punishes him if he breaks its laws, and it's quite right, but it's not always his actions that indicate the essential man. If you'd been a policeman as long as I have, you'd know that it's not what people do that really matters, it's what they are. Luckily a policeman has nothing to do with their thoughts, only with their deeds; if he had, it would be a very different, a much more difficult matter."

Gaze flicked the ash from his cheroot and gave me his wry, sardonic, but agreeable smile.

"I'll tell you what, there's one job I *shouldn't* like," he said.

"What is that?" I asked.

"God's at the Judgment Day," said Gaze. "No, sir."

The Bacchante (*Continued from page 53*)

for a moment by the side of Sir Eden Lisle.

"I hope you don't mind, Sir Eden. We had to do it. Fact is, Miss Morris demanded a straight run through without interruption, said she couldn't get on without it. She wants to show us her conception of Magdalen Smith—we're sticking to Smith after all, she made such a fuss about it—and says she can't do it if she's pulled up. I don't want to inconvenience you."

"Work comes first. Miss Morris is probably right. I noticed, of course, that things weren't going too well."

"D'you really believe in her?"

Sir Eden opened his fine eyes more widely. "She's got a remarkable personality, and a very original method, so far as one has been able to judge of it. I hope to be more certain by this afternoon."

"We should be. Start in, Armytage, and no interruptions. Go right through the play."

"What d'you say to this, Cole?" said Mark Trever to Leighton Cole in the wings. "What the devil's up? We shall be kept here till three o'clock at the earliest without a morsel of food. Who's put them up to this rot?"

"If I ever permitted my lips to utter that loathsome thing, a bromide, I might conceivably say *'Cherchez la femme,'* my dear fellow. As it is, I have no answer ready."

"Well, I think it's a confounded shame."

"And so do I. But is there anything in life that is not a confounded shame? Suppose we take Ireland. Now, Ireland——"

But Trever had moved away, frowning. For reasons considered by him as fully adequate he had worked his hardest to get Valentine put out of the cast. He had failed. And

now he felt that her influence was beginning mysteriously to spread in the great theater.

The curtain was up. The dark auditorium gaped beyond the proscenium. Valentine Morris made her first entrance.

About midway in the stalls sat Campion, Grant, Dale and two other men: Joe Lounsberry, who was a paid "adviser" to the two managers and who read many plays on their behalf, and Bronson, who was Campion's private secretary and very "thick" with him. To them were presently added Hawkins, the scene-painter, and Armytage.

Lounsberry looked like a beard with a man entangled in it, but that man had a vast knowledge of everything connected with the stage. Bronson was small, about thirty-five, with coal-black, dreadfully smooth hair and tiny eyes set very close together. He had a thin, reedy voice and a manner which gave you the impression that whatever he meant, it certainly wasn't what he said. He had been with Campion for many years and was supposed to be Campion's *âme damnée*.

Seven critics for Valentine.

The first act went on its way smoothly. Everyone was practically word perfect.

Dale, who was in a fever of nervous anxiety, and his own most terrible critic, saying perpetually to himself, "Is this dull?" was still as a stone in his seat behind the managers. He was alone in his row, the six other men being all in front of him. During the pause after the first act he noticed that there was no discussion about Valentine's acting. But when the second act finished Campion got up.

"I'm going round!" he exclaimed.

"What for, Jack?"

"To tell that woman she hasn't got over. Good Lord! Why, she might be in her own drawing-room. Just strolls about as if there wasn't any theater in front of her at all."

"Leave her alone till it's finished, Jack. We promised her."

"Promised her? What about my money? I stand to lose more than anyone else if this show's a failure. What do you say, Bronson? What's your opinion?"

The little man shook his smooth head and lifted his reedy voice. "It may be natural, Mr. Campion, but the question is, will it get over?"

"That's it exactly. You've hit it. And I say it won't get over, not by a long way. Lounsberry!" He swung round to the beard. "I ask you—is she any good?"

The beard made a side turn towards the right. A pair of Scotch terrier eyes emitted a yellow gleam. And there fought its way through the quickset hedge of gray bristles a husky voice which said:

"That woman's going to be great, but she wants a crowd to play with. She's a sensitive with a very acute brain. As to temperament, she's full of it. She's not showing the half of what she can do because she gets no response. Fill the house and there'll be electricity about."

"Just what I think, Joe!" said Grant.

"Well, anyhow——" began Campion, about to go.

But Grant got hold of him by the arm. "Say whatever you like at the end, Jack. But let her alone now. If you don't she'll walk out."

"Not she! That's all bluff!"

"I assure you it isn't bluff!" exclaimed Dale, getting up desperately. "I know her. If she's disturbed she will go. Mr. Lounsberry's right. I——"

"Hush!" said someone.

The third act had begun. Campion sank heavily into his stall.

"I've never seen such a set of funks in all my life!" he muttered in the darkness. "Anyone would think that woman was Duse and Bernhardt rolled in one the way she——"

"I say, Jack, give it a chance for the Lord's sake! A lot depends on this."

When the third act was over the seven men were silent in the darkness. For a time that seemed long to Dale not a word was uttered. Then a match was struck, and a little flame showed a segment of one of Campion's great cheeks and a bit of his predatory nose as he bent to light a cigar. Grant heaved a deep sigh; almost a shuddering sigh it was. What did that mean? Lounsberry's beard was still, very still. He seemed more totally lost in it even than usual. Dale was certain that it must be near two o'clock or past. Yet nobody seemed uneasy for luncheon.

When at last someone spoke, he—it was Armytage—said, "Sir Eden Lisle's fine. Say what you like about new methods, these old fellows do know their job."

"What d'you think of Trever, Hawkins?" said Grant.

"He'll be all right. The women'll eat him. He knows just what they want."

"Ah!" said Campion, on a heavy note. Grant looked towards him and Dale, behind, leaned a little forward. "That's what a theater like this wants, people who know what the public are after and can ladle it out to them."

"And *her* conception of the public and the artist!" Dale thought, actually shivering with disgust.

"Leighton Cole'll make a big success," said Armytage.

"Old Di Barton's funny. But she's always funny," said Grant.

"She's as safe as houses," said Campion. "The public's been laughing at her for forty years and they aren't going to stop now."

Still not a word about Valentine Morris!

Dale felt terribly curious about Lounsberry; and presently moved and sat behind him.

"Mr. Lounsberry!" he said, leaning forward.

"Well, my lad?"

"What d'you—do you like her now?"

The beard made a turn to the right, swept round almost into Dale's white face.

"Like's a word I turn in with 'nice,' 'pleasant,' 'bright,' 'cheery'—bunk that means as much as 'hope you're well this morning.' D'you know what that woman's going to do?"

"What?"

"Put every one of the job lot acting with her to bed."

"Job lot!"

"Oh, they can act in their way, and old Lisle will be fine. But"—a gnarled hand came out of the beard mysteriously and found Dale's right arm—"the audience will come out talking and thinking of no one but *her*."

Faintly a gong sounded behind the scenes. The seven men settled down to the last act.

The play ended and there was a deadly silence. Then Armytage got up and hurried to the door which led to the stage. On the stage Valentine, Sir Eden Lisle and Trever broke the position. Trever looked at his watch and said something to Sir Eden. Valentine, standing now by herself down-stage, looked towards the gaping darkness of the theater as if expecting some word, some sign. But none came.

Campion was the second man to move. He shook his shoulders, then got up. Armytage appeared on the stage.

"What's the time, Armytage?" Campion called out, in a voice that sounded angry.

"Just three o'clock," Trever answered. "I suppose we can go and get something to eat at last?"

Grant stood up. "Dismiss!" he said.

"Come on!" said Campion brutally. "I'm starving."

"We've got to see her," said Grant. "She's expecting it."

Valentine turned and walked off the stage.

"We'd better see her later. We've got to get something to eat."

"Let's get the seeing her over. I know her. She'll come right up to our room. We can't keep her hanging about while we go and eat. Come on, Mr. Dale. I say, Joe——" He began whispering to Lounsberry.

Dale moved off.

What was going to happen now? He knew what *he* thought. He knew, it seemed, what

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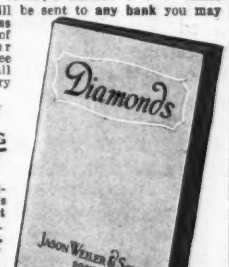
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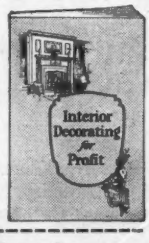
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Joe Lounsberry thought. But what did Grant and Campion think?

Dale passed through a doorway, mounted some steps and found himself in the wings. He couldn't see Valentine. Nor could he see any of the company. The word "dismiss" had doubtless sent them in search of food. Grant joined him, looking grave even to solemnity.

"D'you wish me to come up to your room, Mr. Grant?"

"Of course you must come. Where's Campion?"

"He's gone on, I suppose."

"Where's Armytage? Armytage!"

"Here!" cried a loud exhausted voice.

"Come up to my room. Where's Miss Morris?"

"In her dressing-room, I think."

"Tell her we'll expect her."

"Right!"

They found Campion drinking a whisky and soda in the managers' room.

"Miss Morris coming?" he asked.

"Armytage has gone to her dressing-room. She's sure to be here in a minute."

"Ah! They'll have to get through nippier next time. We must have the curtain down by eleven-twenty at the latest."

"That'll be all right."

And then there was a long pause. Dale noticed with surprise that Grant didn't take a drink. Nor did he sit down. He remained standing and didn't fidget.

Campion crossed over to the window and stood with his back to the room, looking out. And Dale was held in a silence that began to seem to him enchanted, but with a sinister enchantment.

At last the door opened and Armytage, his face mottled with red, appeared. And there was Valentine: a human question, piercing, demanding silently to be answered.

"Come in, Miss Morris. We want to see you. Sit down. You must be tired," said Grant.

"Oh, no!"

But she looked tired in a feverish way, tired as a woman can be when she is painfully alive. She sat down, and there was a silence.

"Press the bell, Lez, will you!" said Campion, in an irritable voice.

The thumb mechanically did its usual work, but Grant said, "What is it, Jack? D'you want——"

Meyer appeared.

"Bring some tea for Miss Morris, Meyer," said Campion.

"Certainly, Mr. Campion."

"Thank you very much," said Valentine. "Well?"

There was something pathetic in the word as she said it, and Dale longed to break through this barbaric silence. But it wasn't for him to do that. Somehow all his mind was now concentrated on Campion. He disliked Campion. He felt dreadfully ill at ease with him. He believed even that he despised him. And yet it was his opinion that Dale was anxious to have. Valentine, he noticed, was looking not at Grant but at Campion. Did she feel as he felt? Was she concentrated as he was concentrated?

"Well?" Campion said, heavily. He seemed oddly uneasy and looked almost awkward, almost loutish as he stood by the writing-table with his hands thrust into his trousers pockets.

"Of course," said Valentine, "it's easy to make excuses, and it's generally a great mistake to make them. But I wish to say that I believe I acted very badly, on account of not having any audience—real audience of the ordinary people—to help me. I didn't realize how terribly I should miss them in that part. It's a wonderful, really wonderful part, a part of a lifetime. I don't expect ever to get another so fine. I didn't do it any sort of justice, I'm sorry to say—until the last act."

Her voice changed as she said the last four words. She stopped. Then she added, very simply, without conceit but with great conviction:

"In the last act—I don't know why—I was suddenly able to do my best. I don't feel that I shall be able to act any better than I did today in the last act even when I have an audience. So I put in a plea for the first three acts, but not for the last. If you thought me bad in the last act, all I can say is that I don't expect ever to be much, if any, better in that than I was today."

The only rejoinder made to this speech came from Campion. And what he said was this, "Oh, here's Meyer with your tea! Put it here, Meyer. That'll do."

Meyer went. Valentine, with an excited hand, poured some tea into the cup and sipped it, looking, now intensely, at Campion.

Campion took his hands out of his pockets, then thrust them in again. "The last act," he then said, "is worth more than the other three acts together."

"I was bad in the first three acts."

"Well, you weren't much good, not in my opinion," said Campion, shoving a plate containing three fresh sponge-cakes towards her.

"I'm sorry," she said—humbly. "I think, I feel sure I shall be better when there's an audience."

"Maybe. Let's hope so," said Campion.

And again there was silence. Valentine, with a shaking hand, took a sponge-cake. Perhaps a couple of minutes, ghastly minutes, passed. Then Campion exclaimed abruptly, in a brutal voice:

"The first three acts were pretty rotten, Miss Morris."

"I'm frightfully sorry. I thought so too."

"But in the last act you pulled out great stuff—drama, big drama. I'm pretty tough, I believe, but you knocked me out, and I'm bound to say so."

He blew his nose surprisingly with a large yellow silk handkerchief.

"Big drama!" he repeated, looking defiantly round at Armytage, Grant, and finally at Dale. "But it was rooted in nature, and that's what got me beat."

And then without another word, and still looking hard and defiant, he walked out of the room.

Valentine began to cry.

On the last Monday evening in the month of November of that year, a chilly, sodden evening of soft rain and drifting leaves, Martin Dale put on a heavy overcoat about half past eight o'clock, took an umbrella and went out for a walk. He had just dined alone at his little house in Tedworth Square, and was smoking a brier pipe.

He made his way to the Thames Embankment and walked slowly along by the river, noting the mysterious effects of darkness and of light, feeling the mystery of the enormous city and feeling simultaneously the mystery of his own life in it, till he was opposite to the yellow glow of the Savoy Hotel. Then he turned up a narrow street to the left, crossed the Strand, and presently stood in front of a great building lighted up by flaring torches. At the entrance to it there were huge red pillars decorated with flutings and ornaments of gold. A brilliantly lighted hall showed through an immense open doorway. And against each of the pillars leaned a board painted white on which in big black lettering appeared the two words, "House Full."

Dale stood in the roadway and looked at those words. Then he moved, walked a little, saw a little more.

"Stalls Full." "Dress-Circle Full." "Upper Circle Full." "Pit Full." "Gallery Full." And then again "House Full."

And it was a Monday evening, the least prosperous evening in theater land.

All the mental agony had ended in this, had been tending towards this.

It was still wonderful to Dale—this happening. And yet already he was beginning to be accustomed to it. It was still wonderful; and yet already he could foresee that a time would come when to be successful would seem

quite natural to him, when perhaps to be rich would also seem quite natural to him. He was not rich yet, but money was flowing into his bank at the rate of four hundred pounds a week, and the management of the Central Theater was about to put on an extra matinée every week, bringing the number of weekly performances up to nine. And offers from America were coming in. The play was a solid success and even Campion, who was not an optimist in things theatrical, expected it to run for ten months or a year. Dale might, without foolish conceit, consider himself "made" as a playwright. And Grant had told him only a few days ago that, counting in America, provincial rights and rights in the British colonies, the play could scarcely bring him less than fifty thousand pounds and might bring him more.

Dale had already decided to give up bothering about the law. House Full was changing his life. Was House Full also going to change his nature? But surely a man's nature cannot change. And what about a woman's?

Dale thought generally along lines laid down for himself alone. He wasn't the slave of other men's minds. Nor was he, at any rate as yet, the slave of habit. He was a clever man with an original mind and a perhaps unusually clear insight into his fellow men and women. He studied men and women, not only because it was natural to him to do so, but also deliberately, consciously, of set purpose. He also studied, or tried to study, himself, and in order to aid himself in that difficult branch of learning he kept a diary. That diary had been written up with unusual fulness since the production of his play at the Central Theater. In it he had propounded a question, "Can a man be the victim of success?" He was thinking of that question now as he looked at "House Full."

And a woman? Can a woman be the victim of her own success?

Valentine Morris's success had been very great, immediate, unquestioned, never in doubt. Lounsberry had been right about her. The huge audience had supplied her with wings. All that she had missed at rehearsal in the first, second and third acts, she had found without difficulty on the first night. She had completely conquered both critics and public. Her success might be, had been, called sudden, but Valentine knew how she had worked for it. She had toiled for nearly ten years. The public didn't know or care about that. But she knew it, and Dale knew it.

And yet he asked himself now whether Valentine was the victim of success. And he had written in his locked-up diary:

"*Possible victims of success.* Man. Woman. A *man* who though he has ideals in art has few ideals in life. In his work has eyes on the Future. In his life inclined to souse himself in the Present. Possibly sentimental, but has a mind that despises sentimentality. Sensual, but often angry at being so. Excessively sensitive, but contains in his temperament strong possibilities of hardening. Has an incurable strain of secret irony, directed not only against others but also against himself. This tends at moments to make him pitiless. Has a great longing for luxury but no desire for the fat and succulent ease of idleness. No orthodox religious beliefs yet no capacity for being satisfied in the full sense of the term by what are generally called worldly things.

"Might not great success harden such a man, render his irony more pitiless, his love of luxury more dangerous to him? Might it not lessen the sensitiveness which, though often a curse to himself, is probably an asset in his art life? Might he not easily be changed by success to his own detriment?

"A *woman* who, perhaps because she is obscurely aware of possessing exceptional gifts, is naturally arrogant, so much so that she cannot help showing this arrogance at certain times, although she has no success, no fame, no 'position' to serve as a basis for it. In



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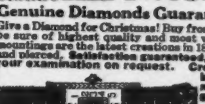
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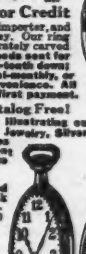


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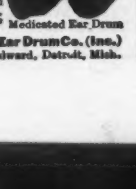
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poverty, obscurity, even in failure—i. e., 'The Leper's Wife'—still keeps a hold on this native arrogance. It is evidently part of her 'make-up.' Must issue from a profound belief in her superiority to all ordinary people.

"This arrogance leads her at times into recklessness. She takes the bit between her teeth and bolts far beyond the limits of caution. Very courageous. Probably has physical courage. Certainly has moral courage. The latter sometimes affirmed and shown by defiance. Brian. Capable of love uncombined with respect or even liking. Capable of cruelty. Intensely individual, therefore, probably, intensely egotistic. By nature is very likely what is usually termed 'a bit of a bully.' Resolved to stamp her seal on others. Very little wax in her, apparently. Yet can love and go on loving when treated badly. Query —sensual love? Worship of a Body in the Pagan Spirit? prolonged lust, perhaps, which she defines as love and believes to be love? Has religious aspirations of a strongly emotional kind. Has also in her a great love of the world and its glory. Greedy and yet independent.

"Might not such a woman be easily changed by success to her own detriment? Would the detriment be artistic—or moral?"

There the entry in the diary had ceased.

Dale walked into the great entrance-hall of the theater. On the right was the box-office for advance booking, on the left the box-office for current booking for that evening. From the latter a rosy middle-aged man gave him greeting.

"Evening, Mr. Dale! Come to see we aren't cheating you? Wonderful, isn't it, for a wet Monday evening! And we must have refused hundreds."

"Good evening. The advance booking been good today?"

"Good? Tremendous. We've got a winner this time and no mistake. Why don't you go round and have a look at the pit?"

"By Jove, that's a good idea! I will."

And he turned out again into the night and went to the pit door. As he bent down to the pay-hole a voice from inside said:

"No room in the pit, sir. Oh, it's you, Mr. Dale! D'you want to go in?"

"Only just for a minute to have a look."

"You won't see much, I'm afraid. They're standing in rows. I heard someone say the management's been warned twice last week by the County Council."

"I'll make myself as small as I can. Hullo, Sergeant—just let me through an instant, will you?"

"Certainly, Mr. Dale. Good evening. It's a jam. Almost as bad as Saturday night."

Almost as bad!

Dale exulted. Success, success of this kind that one could see and feel, jostle against even, was vitalizing. The swing door gave and immediately he saw—backs.

One of the minor miseries of Dale's life was that he was a short man. He hated, he loathed being short. And he also disliked very much being so broad in comparison with his height. He had a striking head which in a half-length photograph looked like the head of a tall man. Why the devil wasn't he tall, instead of being—ugh, the hateful but expressive word!—stocky? In the pit of the Central now he couldn't see a thing. The stage was totally blotted out from his view by standing people taller than himself. He heard Sir Eden Lisle's perfectly produced voice. Then he heard Cole less easily, Sir Eden again, then Valentine. They were in the second act, well on, not far from the end of it. He listened to Valentine's voice without seeing her, listened attentively.

Sometimes the voice of an unseen person tells more to the listener than the voice of that person seen. So it seemed to be now to Dale, as he stood just inside the pit door. He felt Valentine in her voice. He considered her in her voice. He tried to judge of her, not as an actress but as a nature, by her voice. He tried to get near, very near to her, through her voice.

It was a beautiful and a very individual voice, soft in timbre as a rule, neither high nor deep, mellow, a voice of dark color. As he listened Dale thought of a purple pansy and then of a damask rose. Nearly all the critics had written something about Valentine's voice. It was distinctive, *her* voice, unlike the voice of anyone else. And she was very individual, as a woman should be who had a voice like that. Seductive she was. (He was feeling her in that voice.) And what else? He realized that there must be a capacity for sadness in one who had such a voice. And yet there was great vitality in it, and surely sensuality.

A voice like a viola. Was it the voice of good or evil, of truth or humbug, of kindness or cruelty? It didn't quite tell you that. As there is mystery in the viola, so there was mystery in Valentine's voice. It either didn't choose or hadn't the power to reveal everything, the whole nature of the woman whose it was.

The curtain fell. The backs shook slightly as the hands in front of the standing bodies applauded. And Dale turned to go out.

He made his way to the stage door, where Brewster greeted him cordially in the voice that suggested a wine-vault with avenues of vats. How cordial a theater is to the man who is giving it plenty of food!

"Fine house, Mr. Dale! The best Monday night I've ever seen since I've been here. Going in, sir?"

"Yes. I'm just going to look in on Miss Morris. And are Mr. Grant and Mr. Campion here?"

"*Are* they? Well, I should say so. It's a bit of all right watching a success, ain't it?" His naturally ironical expression was almost submerged in smiles.

Dale left him.

Valentine's quarters—she had a large sitting-room as well as a beautiful dressing-room—were on a level with the stage and quite near to it. On the stage quantities of stage-hands were furiously changing the scenery. Dale dodged them and achieved the opposite side, turned to the left and knocked on a door. There was no answer. He knocked again, harder. This time the door was opened by Mrs. Blount.

"Hullo! Good evening! You here! Why, you were with Miss Morris at the Crown!"

"Yes, sir. Miss Morris would have me here. It took a bit of doing but I'm engaged as her dresser from now on."

Another command issued by Valentine! The woman who was necessary and knew it had risen up out of the ashes of the unnecessary woman.

"And the change in myself?" thought Dale.

And he knew that he felt harder, bolder, more self-possessed than he had felt two months ago, even a month ago. And he felt success like a corset bracing him up. But Valentine was beginning to trample. And he —would he ever do that?

The sitting-room had a good many flowers in it. Miss Geean remembered Valentine with flowers. And others, too, sent them. Valentine knew many people now. It was amazing how many people she knew. But what was more amazing was the instinctive way in which she selected from among those now anxious to know her the important, the influential, the talented, the way-makers of the world. Already her rejections were ruthless. In them she showed her nature.

"Why complicate your life with the ordinary?" she had said to Dale. "I've lived among ordinary, horribly ordinary people for twenty-six years, because I couldn't help it. The power of choice wasn't mine. Now it is, and oh, what a lot of human beings I'm going to avoid!"

Wasn't that the artist in life, usually called by those who knew nothing of any art the snob? And yet—and yet?

"I'll tell Miss Morris you're here, sir. She'll be changed in a minute. She's got a lady with her."

Mrs. Blount disappeared into the dressing-room.

"Martin, dear!" called the viola voice.

"Yes?"

"Sit down, there's a lamb. I'm coming directly. Carrie's with me."

"Don't hurry."

"I never hurry!"

Dale sat down in an armchair, lighted a cigaret and waited. He glanced at the big, well furnished room. Brian was there among the flowers as he had been at the Crown Theater. Dale hadn't seen him yet. For Valentine was still *sur la branche*. The play had only been running a very few weeks. And for the first month her total salary had only amounted to forty pounds. But now she was drawing that hundred pounds a week which Campion had been so angry about. There was no trouble about that salary now.

And Valentine had large ideas about the future, very large ideas. Till now she had always been poor and had lived mostly in theatrical lodgings in the provinces. But evidently she had never been reconciled to the comparative squalor which had been her lot. Evidently she had been haunted by desires for luxury, beautiful surroundings. Her plans for the future were no niggardly plans. Sometimes Dale with his four hundred pounds a week wondered how she was going to do it all on the hundred a week that was hers at present.

He heard voices talking in the dressing-room. Light streamed in from the open door.

"What are you doing in there?" called Valentine's voice.

"Smoking and thinking about you."

"Nasty thoughts?"

"Yes, very."

"You're a brute. D'you know, Carrie, that man is a brute? He lives in irony as a sardine dies in oil. Is that right?"

A soft murmur came in reply.

"I wonder how many leading women would wear a gown like this, a cheap, off the peg, badly made gown. But that brute made me. I was humble and obedient then. Wasn't I, Martin?" she added, coming into the sitting-room with Caroline Geean. She went up to him and gave him a light kiss. "I do that to him because he thinks he's made me," she said. "Whereas really I've made him."

"Have you got to the inevitable already?" asked Miss Geean, greeting Dale in her quiet unemotional way.

"What is the inevitable?" he asked.

"That you two should be jealous, each of the other's success. There is scarcely anything so fatally certain of engendering jealousy as a shared success."

"Then," he said, "I suppose there's no hope for Valentine and me."

He looked at Valentine. She wore a plain dark gray gown that had obviously not been made by a good dressmaker. It fitted, but that was all. To any woman looking at it it said, almost audibly, "She took me because she couldn't afford anything else." Valentine said of it:

"The fact of my being a virtuous woman would exude from every seam if the beastly thing wasn't seamless."

Dale had loved her for consenting to wear it.

"Every time I see you in that dress," he said, "I realize what an artist you are. I'm sure you're the only leading actress in London who puts your rôle before yourself. However much you change, I think you will always be dominated by your artistic sense. All other actresses whom I know are governed by personal vanity."

"Change!" she said, fastening on the word as if with teeth. "Why do you say that?"

He saw Miss Geean looking at him with her curiously steady gray eyes.

"And you said it solemnly too!"

He thought of his diary and was silent.

"D'you think I'm changing?" Valentine asked him.

"Oh, yes."

"The fact of having more money, of knowing more people, of living in a different way needn't mean inner change."

"No, of course not."

"Isn't he irritating?" she exclaimed, turning to Miss Geean. "That man has a power of irritating me which is quite extraordinary. Because I'm leaving Bloomsbury and setting up house in Wilton Crescent he thinks my soul is changed—and for the worse, of course."

"Well, if *I* had to live in Tatford's Hotel I should very soon belong to the criminal classes!" said Miss Geean.

"Ah, but you are one of the fortunate beings who have never known poverty and squalor—the smell of boiled cabbage in bedrooms."

Dale noticed that to this outburst Miss Geean made no reply, but by something—what was it? The way she stood, or what?—he seemed to gather that once she had, perhaps, been poor. She was wearing a pale green silk cloak bordered with ermine, and several enormous emeralds. But perhaps she had known the smell of cabbage in bedrooms. Yes—surely she had. But it must have been very long ago. He had a sudden longing which seemed to him born of something bigger, more essential than curiosity to know the facts of Miss Geean's career.

"Curtain's up!" called a voice beyond the door.

Almost immediately afterwards there was a knock, the door was opened and a voice said:

"Your scene, Miss Morris."

"You're not going, Martin? I'll see you again?"

"Yes, of course."

"Are you going back to your box, Carrie?"

Miss Geean looked at Dale as if she were considering something.

"Presently."

"Miss *Morris!*" called a voice.

Valentine disappeared, looking suddenly intent.

When she was gone Miss Geean sat down on a big sofa by the table where Brian's photograph stood. Dale lighted another cigaret. He was standing. The feeling of success, acute, stinging, made him restless. He wanted to do something remarkable quickly, immediately, to assert his talent, or to assert his masculine power in some way, his strength of character, strength of will, firmness of purpose. This success breathing all about him was wonderful but it wasn't enough. Suddenly he wanted to conquer again, to conquer the future, to mount, to shine, to blaze out in the world.

"You are unquiet," said Miss Geean's soft voice.

"Yes. And how quiet you are!"

"She's a restless being."

"Were you ever restless?"

"Perhaps not physically. But what is physically?"

After a pause Dale said:

"Do tell me. Did you foresee her success?"

"Yes. That is why I decided to know her."

Something in Dale revolted against this remark. And it was the same thing which revolted against Valentine's determination not to know the unimportant, the unsuccessful, the ordinary, the humble, the poor. A decision against life, any human life, seemed to him the decision of a brain, and perhaps of a heart, too restricted in vision.

"You haven't had long to wait," he said.

He sat down. Suddenly there came to him a desire to discuss Valentine with this curious woman, whom he didn't yet understand.

"No. But she was ready when I first saw her. She was *à point*. I knew that."

"You know a great deal, Miss Geean. I feel that always when I'm with you."

She slightly moved her shoulders under the green silk and the ermine. Her cloak was open in front, but she kept it over her shoulders. He saw a white dress, a white throat, emeralds. The almost white yellow hair looked very soft and careful under the lights. Careful! This woman was surely very careful of her life.

And Valentine was very careless. Wasn't she?

"Will she develop in her art?" he asked, as she said nothing.

"Yes. Are you going to write more for her?"



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"I'm writing something now. But she doesn't know it."

"Why?"

"She might try to interfere. Don't tell her."

Miss Geean smiled. "You're afraid of her. Many people will be that, I think. It's a great power, the power to make people afraid of you."

"But surely an ugly one?"

"Oh, I don't know. Nearly all the great ones have it, I think. If you would be great there's one thing you mustn't be."

"And what's that?"

"Soft."

Dale thought of his companion as an ermine muff with a pair of iron hands hidden inside of it.

"She's begun to bully this theater already," he said.

"Yes. But the theater likes it."

"Are you fond of Valentine?"

"Yes; but not so fond as you are."

Dale felt that he reddened. This explanation of him by her startled him.

"Naturally I——" He stopped. "This common success has linked us together, perhaps."

"And are you happy in it?"

"Tremendously, in a way. And yet——" He stopped. He seemed to be searching himself; searching, and he found—wasn't it a core of melancholy?

"And yet—yes?"

"I'm ever so much happier than I was. Success does buoy one up. If we'd had a great failure here, she and I, I should have been desperate."

"She wouldn't. She's a great fighter."

"Yes. And she's safe enough now," he said. "Unless she rushes ahead too fast. This house in Wilton Crescent, furniture, pictures, Oriental carpets—she has large ideas."

"Could a woman who can act as she can have small ones?"

"No; possibly not. But I don't suppose she knows much about the management of money. She seems to think a hundred pounds a week is the purse of Fortunatus. I shouldn't be surprised if she ran up debts."

"I should be very much surprised if she didn't."

"But what's going to happen then?"

"I don't think she'll worry about that."

"You think she'll be quite happy in mortgaging the future?"

"Oh, yes. You wouldn't."

Again Dale felt slightly uncomfortable. "No," he said, with a tinge of defiance. "I prefer to know exactly where I stand. And so, I'm sure, do you."

"Valentine will float about quite comfortably at the edge of abysses. And remember this: she's put the debts, and the abysses, and the mortgaging of her future, and even the little son with no legal right to a name—she's put them all into your play."

"And something else too!" he thought. But he didn't say that to her.

"Let us take her as she is, Mr. Dale, and be thankful for her."

"I am thankful for her."

Two great emeralds gleamed on her white fingers as she drew her silk cloak over her breast. "I'm going back to the box now. I want to see her big scene in the third act."

"How soft that ermine looks!"

She stroked the fur at her throat. When she did that her small hand looked voluptuous. "I like soft things with my body," she said. "But my brain approves of many hard things."

"I'm sure you've read lots of Nietzsche and agreed with it all."

"I've read some. But I'm not a great reader. Still, I've got a good many first editions."

"What haven't you got?" was his thought, as he went with her to the door. "Emeralds, first editions, tapestries!"

"I'll leave you in your box and then go to the managers' room."

"Thank you." She went on in front of him, walking softly, stealthily even.

They stole along by the wings among dusty men, hearing the loud voices of those on the stage.

"From here it sounds artificial," he whispered.

"Except her voice. Listen!"

They stood still for a moment. Valentine was speaking.

"Yes; she sounds natural."

They heard the fine voice of Trever. Dale frowned, saw the gray eyes looking, made his brow smooth.

The door opened slowly. They left the peculiar world.

Campion had treated many women badly during a life in which his position as a theater owner and manager had given him power over women. Because of that he was alive to the signs that foretell the approach of the revenges of women. As the success of Valentine Morris grew, Campion began almost to hate it. He had said before the first night, "If that woman's a success, then God help us all." Now that help didn't seem to be coming to him.

What irritated him specially was the social success of his leading lady, the murmur of which became very loud in his ears. Miss Morris was being received, was even being eagerly sought, by all sorts of important and influential people whom he didn't know, and whom certainly Grant didn't know. Grant was purely a man of the theater, and didn't care about anything smart or socially brilliant.

But Campion had a wife, whom he persistently betrayed but whom he wasn't able to ignore. She knew, had long known, of his marital infidelities. She put up with them, had to put up with them. But she "took it out of him" whenever she saw a chance of doing so. And though he so cynically and openly was false to her, he was nevertheless afraid of her.

She was a vulgar showy woman with a strong desire to shine, to be noticed, to be successful, to be talked about. In the place of love and desire she put social ambition. She had no children. She had no lovers. Her husband was perpetually and openly "mixed up," as she phrased it, with other women. But he was rich and she made him give her plenty of money. He had what she called "a position" as a financier of plays and part owner of an important theater. She considered him "a magnate" and played the part of a magnate's wife, concentrating on clothes, entertainments, first nights, bridge, race meetings, dancing, gambling and "knowing people."

They had a lustrous house in Park Lane, shining with ostentatious luxury. Their car was of course of the most expensive make. They gave parties. Mrs. Campion "went everywhere," cruelly painted, cruelly overdressed, cruelly vivacious, with the terrible smile of eternal youth fastened upon her pinched lips. In certain "circles" she was a "somebody." But she never had penetrated, never could penetrate, beyond the theatrical and *nouveaux riches* sets. She was a cabbage-rose. The orchids wouldn't have her. But unfortunately she persistently longed to be of those written about in the top paragraphs of the social column.

Mrs. Campion was one of the human beings whom Valentine Morris now found herself in a position to avoid; and Valentine Morris avoided her, blatantly, without scruple or pity. And now Mrs. Campion was obliged to see from afar the woman whom her husband had "made" passing happily into the regions she had never attained to, even shining in them quite comfortably.

Campion was told about all this. For Mrs. Campion had few reticences when alone with her unfaithful husband. And she was one of those repetitive women who think that a statement increases in devastating force by being said again and again. She wouldn't take Valentine's definite "no" for an answer, and urged her husband to bring about what she had failed in accomplishing.

"You have made her. Without you she'd be drudging about the provinces. She can't refuse to come to us if you ask her."

But Valentine did refuse quite calmly. She had developed a marvelous power of saying "no" since she had become a success. She was polite to Campion, but she made him understand that she was only connected with him for business reasons and had not any intention of allowing him and his wife to come near her in that part of her life which ran its course outside of the theater.

"She's the biggest snob I know!" said the exasperated manager to Grant, to his wife, to anyone who would listen to him.

But he knew the exact value which Valentine now had in his theater. And that value was great. Whether she was "a laster" he couldn't yet tell. But for the time being she was the most talked-of actress in London, and dirt-cheap at the hundred pounds a week which she was getting. And the way the "big bugs" had taken her up was astonishing.

And maddening!

But—and this was strange—secretly Campion worshiped Valentine's talent. Once he had made her cry by his unexpected appreciation of her acting. She had never forgotten that phrase of his—scarcely his it had sounded; like another's phrase mysteriously wrung out of him—"rooted in nature." The man had penetration, subtlety even, and under all his coarseness a sensitiveness that could be reached by refinement grounded on truth. It must be so. And as he secretly worshiped, so she secretly sympathized with something in him.

But she didn't mean to be a friend in his house. And she didn't mean to have him and his awful wife as intimates in hers.

She was in Wilton Crescent now. The house she had taken wasn't large but it was very convenient and contained some good rooms. There were three bathrooms. There was a charming long room built out at the back which Valentine had made into a "living-room." It was a cozy, comfortable and beautiful room in which one could read, talk, be friendly, be happy. Valentine had rented the house unfurnished, and had furnished it deliciously with the assistance of Caroline Geean. Towards the end of January of the new year she gave a housewarming party. She chose a Sunday evening for it. Dale was invited.

A few days before this par[illegible]le had a telephone message from the theater asking him to come round to the managers' room during the evening if he was free. He went and found Campion and Grant there. Campion was in evening clothes, Grant in a dark day suit with white slips to his waistcoat.

"Hullo, Dale," said Campion, with a forced geniality. "Have a cigar? Sit down. There's the whisky at your elbow."

Dale sat down, accepted the cigar, refused the whisky.

"What is it? Anything about business?" He looked from Grant to Campion. "Is it dropping?"

"Oh, it always drops slightly about this time," said Grant. "But that's nothing. I give this play at least another six months—till the end of July."

"It's a certainty till then," added Campion.

"That's good—a run of nearly a year!"

"Very good! But one has to look ahead these days. Are you doing anything now?" said Campion.

"Yes, I am working on something."

"You haven't made any arrangement yet? Of course you'll give us the first chance with it."

"It isn't finished. Nobody's seen it."

"Not Miss Morris?" said Campion.

"No, nobody."

"Well," said Grant, "we should like to have the first offer of it. I suppose we can count on that, eh?"

Dale hesitated, and was surprised by his own hesitation.

"You wouldn't go away from us surely after the opportunity we've given you here!" said Campion. "What?"

"It isn't that."

"Then what is it? Somebody else is after your next?"

"Oh, I've had suggestions. I suppose that's usual after a success. But I'm perfectly free."

"Well, then?" said Grant.

"Can we count on you giving us the first offer?" said Campion.

Dale still felt the unaccountable hesitation within him. And now he realized that it was connected with Valentine. He didn't want to make any promise, to arrange anything, till he had spoken to her.

"If the play I'm working on seems fitted for a big theater——" he began, rather doubtfully.

But Campion broke in, with the ruthlessness habitual in him. "Look here, Dale! Are you writing another big part for Miss Morris?"

"Yes. At least I'm trying to."

"And d'you mean to tell us she knows nothing about it?"

"She knows I'm working. But I've told her nothing. And I don't mean to till I've finished."

"But anyhow you mean her to play the principal part?"

"If she will."

"It wouldn't do for Maud Eden?" said Grant casually.

"Rather not! I'm doing it for Miss Morris."

There was a silence. Dale broke it by saying, "D'you mean that you don't want Miss Morris in your next production here?"

"We do and we don't," said Grant. "She's a great draw now, of course. And she's a confoundedly good actress."

"But she plays the devil in the theater," said Campion.

"I dare say she's difficult sometimes."

"Difficult!" said Campion. "My Lord! She thinks we ought all to be on our knees thanking her for deigning to have set foot in this theater."

"I really think you exaggerate," said Dale.

"You don't know. You've managed to get on the right side of her. I've never had to do with such a woman in my life. She's the limit!"

"And so you don't intend to engage her again?"

"Well, I don't know," said Grant. "There's the fact that she's a big draw—at present."

"Yes," said Campion. "At present."

"Why did you send for me tonight?" asked Dale.

"We've got to [illegible] for next autumn," said Grant. "And we wanted to know whether you'd got one, and whether or not, if you had, you meant to make a point of having Miss Morris in it."

"That's it," said Campion.

"I see. Well, I hope to finish what I'm doing this spring. And I shall certainly want to offer the leading part to Miss Morris."

"Right!" said Grant. "Now we know where we are."

At this moment Meyer slipped in. "Excuse me, Mr. Grant, but could Mr. Arnstein see you for a minute?"

"Arnstein? Where is he?"

"I've shown him into the Garrick room."

"I'll come. Excuse me, Dale."

Grant went out. Campion had been standing up all this time, but now he sat down near Dale, after seeing that the door of the room was shut. He looked harassed and even, Dale thought, less stonily self-possessed than usual, and therefore more human. Dale and he had never become intimate. Not even the great success of Dale's play had drawn them together. But now there was a look in his dissipated eyes that suggested to Dale a desire on his part to get into a closer relation.

"Have a whisky, Dale!"

Dale looked again at Campion's eyes and accepted. His perpetual interest in the human species was roused into keen activity. The acceptance of the whisky which he didn't want might mean a step forward with Campion.

"This is an awfully good cigar," he said, with as much geniality as he could manage.

"I wanted to have a talk with you," said Campion.

He hesitated, looked even embarrassed, turned his cigar round and round, staring at it while he did so. Then he looked up at Dale furtively.

"We're in a success together, a big success," he said. "I don't know how you feel, but seems to me a success is a friendly sort of thing, ought to draw folks together."



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Dale rejoined with all the heartiness he could muster, "Why not? You're right. Success ought to warm up the people in it."

"Just what I think. I've always liked you and believed in you, Dale. And now I've had a hand in helping you to success. Of course I know your success is my advantage. Still, your play wasn't everybody's play, and I took the risk with it."

"Yes. And the risk with Miss Morris."

"Exactly—yes. And that was a bigger risk. But *she* doesn't seem to sense that. There's no more gratitude in that woman than there's gentleness in—in a viper."

"You know, Mr. Campion——"

"Do drop the mister!"

"Well, Campion, you know that I like Miss Morris."

"But you must see how difficult she is." Dale was silent. "Anyhow, difficult or not difficult," said Campion, in an unusually gentle voice, "I want to get on better terms with her."

"I'm sorry you——"

"It's like this. I want to be friendly with her, but she holds me off."

"Surely you're——"

"And my wife wants to be friendly too. We feel that in a way we discovered Miss Morris, gave her her chance. It seems odd if everybody's to be her friend but us. My wife feels badly about it. Of course that's strictly between you and me."

"Of course!" said Dale, feeling very uncomfortable.

"I believe Miss Morris is giving a party next Sunday, isn't she?" asked Campion, again turning his cigar round and round and staring at it.

"I believe she is—yes, she is."

"You're going, of course?"

"Yes, I am."

"A housewarming, isn't it?"

"Something like that, I suppose."

"Well, Dale, it'll seem odd if everybody's asked except my wife and I. You must see that."

"But what can I—but it isn't my party."

"I bet it isn't. I know you wouldn't leave us out. Look here, Dale, this is how it is. I don't care about parties and all the social rot. But women—well, you know how women feel about such things. My wife takes it badly to heart that we aren't asked for Sunday. Surely if Miss Morris leaves us out people will talk and wonder. That's how my wife sees it."

"But what can I do?"

"Why, you're a great chum of Miss Morris's. She thinks a lot of you. You might give her a hint about it. Of course without saying—— Hullo, Grant! What's Arnstein want?"

"Well, I must be off," said Dale.

"And look here, remember Grant and I want to have the first say about your new piece. That's only fair, Dale."

"It's awfully good of you——"

"Good be hanged! It's business. Where can you find a management that'll do better for you than we can?"

"That's true."

"Then have we your word that you'll give us the first reading of your new piece?"

"Mr. Campion, can you see Mr. Daniel Shinkmann?" said Meyer at this juncture, popping in.

And while Campion began to swear Dale said "Good night" and went out.

That night after the play was over Dale had a few minutes with Valentine. She had changed rapidly and was dressed to go to a supper party at Lady Manning's house in Arlington Street. He could only detain her for a very short time. She was obviously restless, and gave him an impression of excitement and melancholy combined.

"What has Campion been saying to you?" she asked, lighting a cigaret. "Blount, just go and see whether Lady Manning's car has come for me yet, will you?"

"Yes, Madam."

"How did you know Campion had said anything to me?"

"In a theater like this one knows about everything. Is he after your new play?"

"Well——"

"You are not to promise it to him or to anyone till I've seen it. You are writing it for me, and I shall take it to the theater it's best suited to. Don't promise anything."

"I haven't yet. But look here, Valentine, can't you be better friends with Campion?"

She stared at him. "Friends — with Campion!"

"Yes."

"*Friends* with that man! If I were, how could I be friends with you, with Adelaide Sartoris, with Di Manning, with——" She stopped. "Dear Martin, I thought you were a man of discrimination."

"I only mean, why not be on decent terms with him?"

"I am. When I meet him I show my teeth to him and say, 'Fine day, Mr. Campion!'"

"But—I know I've no earthly right to interfere—but couldn't you ask him and his wife to your party on Sunday?"

"Martin dear, when did you go mad? There were no premonitory symptoms. Your sanity seemed drastic. If there'd been a heat-wave——"

"Now, Valentine——" He took her hand. "Don't play the buffoon. Really, Campion and his wife will feel most awfully left out if you don't ask them. After all, Campion's given you——"

"Martin, I forbid you to feed me with bromides. I owe no more to Campion than he owes to me. And you know it. I'm good business. That's what I am to Campion. And he's got me dirt-cheap at a hundred a week. His wife is a vulgar atrocity who makes him pay heavily for his persistent unfaithfulness to her. One woman like that would utterly destroy the atmosphere even of a party given in the Elysian Fields. You ask me to introduce a bouquet of garlic into my orchid house! Dear Martin, it's a pity, but you are mad or——" She took him by the shoulders, and gazed into his eyes. "Is this your idea of Christianity? If it is, almost thou persuadest me to be an atheist. Well, Blount, has it come?"

"Yes, Madam, the car is there."

"Give me the gardenias Miss Geean sent tonight, will you?"

"They are here, Madam."

"Smell them, Martin! No, dear, maniacs or Christians, or whatever we are, we can't live with garlic. If Campion's asked you, just tell him from me—*no*. How I love that word! For twenty-six years I said 'yes' and 'certainly.' But now, no, no, *no!* Come along, Blount! Go in front to protect me. Martin, for heaven's sake don't be soft." She gave him one of her light kisses, that meant so little and troubled him so much. "My party's not going to be theatrical," she said. "It isn't the *company* I'm entertaining on Sunday. Did you really think it was?"

Remembering those words, Dale was surprised when on the following Sunday night he walked into the long room at Wilton Crescent and found Mark Trever standing close to the door with his hostess.

Mrs. Sartoris had long ago described Valentine to Dale as "*une botte de surprises*." That night, although he was familiar with many of her moods and had been startled by many outbursts on her part, she managed to produce new surprises for him from her apparently inexhaustible box.

The relation of a man to a woman is more often than not what the woman chooses it shall be. Valentine had chosen to make of Dale a "chum." She treated him with a sometimes careless, sometimes affectionate familiarity which put sex in the background, evidently with intention. He was only some four years older than she was, yet she often, ridiculously, called him "Uncle Martin," and she had taught little Brian, who was now at last with her sharing the glories of the new house, to give him that name.

Dale smiled at the absurdity when the words

came from her lips, and welcomed them from Brian's. But he was acute enough to realize that in spite of his cozy intimacy with Valentine, shared so far as he knew by no other man, she was quite consciously and deliberately putting him, and keeping him, in a place that not he but she had decided should be his. He was to be the comfortable and absolutely harmless friend, the confidant when she was in the mood for confidences, the "old shoe" of easy wearing, almost the carpet slipper by the fireside.

But Dale was neither sexless nor at all addicted by temperament to the pale habits of the tame cat. He didn't mind being "Uncle" to little Brian; but he secretly resented having Valentine as a self-elected niece.

When he thought over the matter of his intimacy with Valentine he felt sure that she knew how strongly he was attracted by her, and had chosen to turn him into a *soi-disant* "Uncle" because she wasn't so attracted by him. The matter was plain to his discerning mind. Often it irritated and vexed him intensely. But hitherto he hadn't shown either irritation or vexation.

The sight of Mark Trever standing by Valentine in the long ground-floor living-room in Wilton Crescent caused in Dale a thrill of surprise, but also a thrill of something else, more painful, uglier, deeper reaching. Valentine had of course once flatly told him that she loved Trever. When she had told him he had believed her. But since her growing success, and the complete change in her life brought about by it, she had never spoken intimately about Trever again; and Dale had begun to hope that the turn of fate was sweeping her away from an old fascination which something within him estimated as a fascination of lust rather than of love, obstinate though it was.

And now Trever had been chosen out of the company at the Central Theater as the only one whom Valentine cared to have at her strictly non-theatrical housewarming! So Dale said to himself with an ugly shock of surprise and resentment. But he was mistaken. For within a few minutes Sir Eden and Lady Lisle came in and were warmly welcomed by Valentine. Sir Eden and Trever were the only representatives of the company.

Even at that very early stage of her success Valentine chose to mark her exclusiveness, that exclusiveness which caused the unincluded by her to attempt a poor revenge by the shrill outcry "Snob!" There were those who believed her exclusiveness to be "policy." Dale saw it in another light, saw her as the artist in life choosing, as a connoisseur chooses the exactly right picture for a certain room, the exactly right jewel to go with a certain gown, or even the exactly right wine to go with a particular dish.

No! The hall-mark of the true artist.

But what about Mark Trever? Hadn't Valentine flung artistry over the mill by including him in the Wilton Crescent party?

Did Dale estimate the young actor wrongly, giving way to the deeply rooted prejudices of the male? Even Dale, a short man who loathed being short, a sensitive man who secretly resented a great fact in Valentine's past, saw and acknowledged that Trever looked marvelously handsome on the stage, that he had exceptional physical grace and fascination, that he was even gifted. His immense popularity with the public was not wondered at by Dale.

But wasn't he really uninteresting? And wasn't he somehow common? Valentine had spoken of her orchid house. Mark Trever was surely no lover or understander of orchids.

It was amazing to Dale how she made herself at home among her guests. No man, he was certain, could ever have accomplished the feat she accomplished that night, the feat of being at ease among people in whose world she had never set foot but a few weeks before. The play had been produced in October. It was now January. Valentine's life had been spent in the English provinces, wandering from one town to another, associating with English provincial actors and actresses. She herself had told Dale so. She had been "dreadfully poor." Her experiences no doubt had often been sordid. She knew quite enough, perhaps far too much, of the seamy side of life. Till now she had probably never had the chance of mixing with people either brilliant, cultivated, or even well-bred.

Where she came from, what her origin was, Dale didn't yet know. Perhaps he would never know. Although Valentine had often such an air of almost dare-devil carelessness, although she often seemed to talk at random, evidently she knew what she didn't mean to say and took care not to say it. She had never told Dale what her "people" had been, and though he had heard of her mother, and knew her mother had brought little Brian to her in London, he had never met Mrs. Morris. The father apparently was either dead or had faded away from the family life.

She had a sort of innate cultivation, and that he felt to be a gift, an attribute of her great talent, rather than the result of education, of upbringing, of association. And she had the strange arrogance which he had noted so early in their acquaintance, an arrogance which seemed at times to stand in the place of ancestors, to emanate from a conscious aristocracy of the soul.

Nevertheless, that night she astonished him.

Perhaps some sixty people had been invited and came to her house. Sir Eden Lisle and Trever were the only people belonging to *the* Profession, except of course Valentine herself. In fact when, fairly late in the evening, Dale examined the rooms for a moment with those terribly observant dark eyes of his, he murmured to his mind, "It's 'no' *in excelsis!*" Valentine's party seemed to him a fierce and yet delicate assertion of "no."

Caroline Geean was there. And—why was that?—Dale had the feeling that with her presence was connected a hidden concession on Valentine's part, a tacit refusal to "no." Mrs. Sartoris and her immensely tall, loosely aristocratic husband were there. And there were some beauties, but not of the theater; and there were some of those high-bred and exclusive women who manage—heaven knows how!—to keep their names and their doings almost entirely out of the newspapers, and who realize that not to be chronicled is almost the only distinction left to importance in this Judgment Day of publicity. And there were two or three Americans, dressed with quiet perfection and wearing few jewels, good-looking, marvelous in line, the last word against blatancy. And there were girls, charming and self-possessed girls, who all seemed to know each other very well, who called each other by Christian or nicknames, and who mostly called Miss Morris "Valentine." But these girls were not all of them selected from the program sellers at charity matinées.

There were a good many men, nearly as many, not quite, as women, and several of them were men of distinction who were scarcely ever seen in general society.

Lord Henry Savill, a remarkable theological intellect housed in a thin, bony body, was there, to everyone's astonishment; and that retiring Scottish genius, Alan Fife, and Broderick, the mystical poet, who hated the theater, and Rixby, the historian, and Mr. William Thor, pale, brilliant and condemnatory, whose beautifully written books were published privately at a couple of guineas the volume, and sold about six thousand copies apiece, and "appreciated" in value as the weeks rolled by. Clarey Leath, the great satirist, was there, bringing his square-cut reddish-gray beard, and his twinkling green-gray eyes, and his courteous, wicked voice with him. And there was surely a new play in his gaze when his eyes rested, as they often did, on Valentine.

And there were three or four Guardsmen, young, fresh in dissipation, hilarious without being noisy, with touches of quicksilver in their veins to prove that Englishmen aren't all like the continental caricatures of them; and there were young Americans, two of them from the American Embassy; and there were three or



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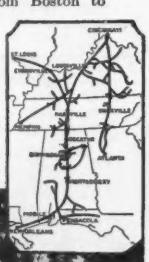
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four musicians; and there were a few of those rich men who are not creative, not even very energetic, but who sincerely love the arts, and cultivate the acquaintance of the artists who are sincere, and who cannot be vulgar and merely acquisitive.

A big painter, intensely musical, too, was there, and another painter with a wife whom he publicly loved and could not cease from painting. And there was a woman pianist, supreme in Bach, with a strange profile, enticing in its irregularity and suggestive of other irregularities. And there was a Roman Catholic priest.

The Roman Catholic priest was a Father Bexland, and, it seemed, he came from the Midlands and was an old friend of Valentine's, who introduced Dale to him, with the added whisper, "I love this man." He knew nobody, it appeared, but Valentine introduced him to everybody, and he had in him a marvelous, powerful sincerity which put people wonderfully at their ease with him. He was middle-aged, of medium height, rather broad and burly in figure, with a handsome, still face and beautiful hazel eyes, kind, earnest and full of will. He had never seen Valentine act and probably never would.

"I don't think of her as an actress," he said to Dale. "I think of her as something more universal than that."

Dale wondered if he knew about Brian. Dale wondered about many things that night.

Valentine's ease was not that of a woman determined to hold her own among others, and holding it by sheer power of will and obstinacy of intention. No; it was rather the ease of one plunged in an atmosphere that suited her, that she delighted in, that was bringing her mental, perhaps even spiritual health. Some of the pretty girls seemed almost to worship her. She had not to make up to them; they made up to her. Dale saw at once that she was a success, a great success with the women. He realized that on the stage she was going to be even more the women's actress than the men's. And that, as he knew, spells success of money.

Everything was very well done, but without ostentation. The flowers were lovely. Dale was sure Caroline Geean had made herself responsible for them. There was no entertainment. People just talked and there was supper; and after supper they talked with even greater animation. And Dale enjoyed himself a good deal. But he wondered.

He wondered at Valentine's great social qualities, suddenly and definitely shown to him. She had an innate instinct for the best, and evidently the best welcomed her, found her piquant, interesting, easy. That evening Dale found in her a distinction of personality that seemed part of her talent, a quiet "I am I" that had no immodesty, no "push," but that somehow had authority. He wondered.

And he wondered about Miss Geean. That sense of Valentine's having made an unavowed concession in inviting Caroline Geean that night clung obstinately to Dale. The Campions had been resolutely kept out. Miss Geean had been let in. That was how he couldn't help feeling it. But the Campions were quite unmistakably—garlic. And Miss Geean quite unmistakably wasn't garlic. She was evidently immensely rich. She was charming, had something remarkable about her, had extraordinary taste.

And yet?

What was it? Dale's instinct persisted, the instinct that told him Valentine wouldn't have asked Miss Geean to this particular gathering if she hadn't either been very fond of her or been very grateful to her, so grateful that she wanted to please Miss Geean and was ready to make a little sacrifice for that.

As to Mark Trever—he was the surprise of the party, and that very fact, in such a party, seemed to give to him, Dale thought, just a *soupçon* of vulgarity. People were surprised to find him, and pleased, even some of them excited in their surprise. It was like the traveling conjurer appearing unexpectedly in the market-place. Good gracious!

Trever stood out from his surroundings didn't blend with them, and that wasn't because of his striking good looks, his athletic grace. No; it was because he looked like a performer. Dale thought of a sleek and handsome circus horse introduced unexpectedly into a stable of thoroughbreds.

But he was quite a success. The odd thing was that even his success seemed to introduce a false note into the otherwise cleverly harmonized evening.

Valentine seemed to take little notice of him. But she introduced him to most of her guests. She played hostess well without seeming to play any part.

When it was getting late and some people had gone she murmured to Dale, in passing him, "Stay last, Uncle Martin!"

It was past one o'clock on Sunday night, or Monday morning, when Dale outstayed Mark Trever in Wilton Crescent. Evidently the actor must have read in Dale's eyes an implacable decision. And possibly he was sufficiently subtle to suspect that it was secretly encouraged by Valentine. But he showed nothing except smiling good nature and bonhomie as he at last said:

"Well, I must be off, Miss Morris, though you and I, being in the profession, can't call this late." He took her hand with a sort of manly frankness and gripped it. "This has been one of the best evenings I remember. Just the sort of quiet cultivated beano I enjoy and get too seldom. So much more in it than in all those night-club affairs and restaurant suppers that we have to put up with as a rule. As to your house"—he looked round, almost dramatically—"it's a peach. You've got taste."

"Think so?" dropped casually from Valentine's lips.

"Of course I do," said Trever, with male intensity. "And as to your friends, one would have to go a long way to meet more delightful people. You're in luck."

The last words came from him with an intonation that suggested surprise, not too carefully hidden. He paused and seemed about to say something else, looked at Dale and said nothing.

"I'm glad you enjoyed it," Valentine said, still casually. "Good night."

"Good night—Miss Morris. Ever so many thanks for asking me. Good night, Mr. Dale. This play of yours is going to run forever."

"And that's partly your fault!" said Dale.

Trever got away on a laugh.

When the door shut behind him Valentine stood and looked at it. After a moment, during which she seemed to be listening intently, she said, "He's gone. D'you want anything more, Uncle Martin?"

"No, Aunt Valentine, unless I may smoke a last cigar."

"Smoke it, my dear."

As Dale pulled out his cigar case and began to prepare things she stood where she was, glancing about the long room, with its golden brown walls, and its many bookcases unprotected by glass, and its Epstein bust of a Café Royal girl, and its deep sofas and armchairs of spring sky-blue and daffodil yellow, and its perfect copy of Titian's "Salome," and the other copy of the portrait by Ingres of the painter Granet, with the cloak and the book and the sideways-looking eyes, and the long grand piano, and the long windows covered with spring green curtains. On the open hearth a log fire was still smoldering, and a Pekingese slept on an old-gold cushion. And in the still air there lingered the faintest suspicion of the scent of amber. And Valentine wore a dress the color of silver with a silver sheen on it.

As Dale threw his match into the log fire Valentine said:

"I shall never give a perfect party."

"Why?" Dale asked.

"Because I'm a fool. Because I'm a woman with a touch of genius in me but a twist—a moral twist, I suppose you'd call it. Or is it a twist of the brain, something wrong with my gray matter? In those awful theatrical



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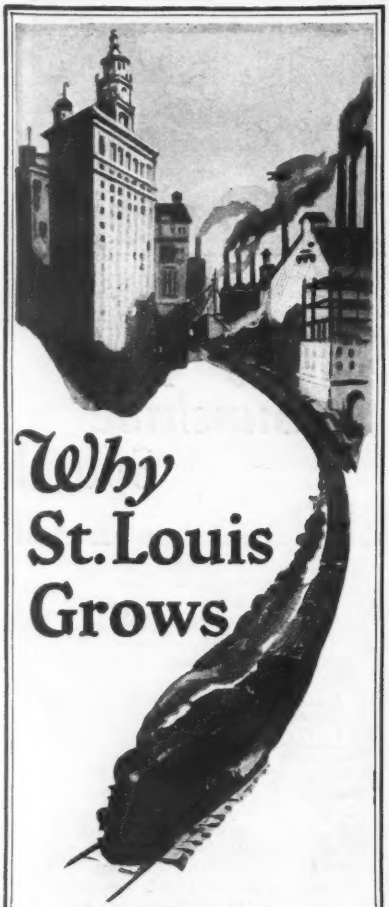
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lodgings, in the homes from home that I've had nightmares in for years, I've dreamed of my perfect party. And now"—she spread out her long arms—"I have this, all this, and I know wonderful people, and I give my party, and—and I ask a false note! Because I must! Because I must! Oh, Uncle Martin!"

She sat down swiftly in a big armchair near the smoldering logs, and suddenly she looked tired and even—yes, it was incredible, but yes!—and even old.

"But which was the false note?" said Dale, sitting near her.

She turned sharply. "You humbug! The false note was Mark Trever. Oh, what a false note he was!" Dale was silent. "Didn't you know I meant him? But who else——"

She stopped.

"Carrie!" she then said defiantly. "You thought I——"

"Don't leap to conclusions!"

"Carrie in certain ways is marvelously cultivated."

"I'm sure she is."

"What do you know—about——"

"Absolutely nothing."

"And about him—Mark—so much, everything that matters between us."

"Why did you ask him?"

"Oh, for such a simple reason! Because he wanted to come. And directly I knew he wanted, badly, I had to ask him. And he stood out, like a boil on a smooth, satiny skin."

Again she was silent, and Dale said nothing.

"And I didn't. I was at home in it all, marvelously at home. And yet I've never had a house of my own before, never a pretty room like this. And I've always lived among dreadful people. But you see I was *meant* for all this and he wasn't. And yet when he wants to come I have to ask him." After a moment she said, "Isn't it awful? Since I'm a success he's beginning to want me again."

"Yes, that is awful. But it's terrifically human."

"He's become interested in me again, not at all because I am what I am but *only* because he sees the impression I make on others. That's the measure of what he is. You are so different. You saw, you felt, through Campion's jeering and doubt, through Grant's horrible preoccupation about Dan Shinkmann. But he has to be shown—by others.

"If I were what I am, but dragging about the provinces, only able to receive people in back streets of towns like Preston, Wigan, Leeds, he would think I had nothing in me. He has a mind like that. Really he has. And I have known it for nearly eight years, or quite. And yet I ask him here tonight! D'you remember once saying to me, 'No, I don't suppose you are,' when I had said I wasn't generally lucky?"

"I remember. I had a feeling that you might sometimes be your own enemy."

"You are clever. You are very clever. And he is just a common man with gifts and physical graces. And you understand me wonderfully and he doesn't understand me at all, and doesn't even want to understand me. And you care for me, with your mind too, because you have a mind that can care, and he doesn't. He's the sort of man who cares for a woman when she's well-dressed and doesn't care for her when she's got an unbecoming or old-fashioned gown on. And I can talk to you and I can't talk to him, not really talk. Your cleverness makes me feel how clever I am. And his stupidity makes me feel humiliated, as if *I* were the stupid one. And I'm awfully fond of you—but I love him."

"I'm not sure of that. Could love analyze so cruelly as you do?"

"But I am clear-brained. I've got brains. Haven't you found that out?"

"I know you have. But I don't think love often sees with such cruel clearness as you do. A boil on a satiny skin!"

"But he *was!*"

"Valentine, are you sure it isn't lust you feel, not love?"

"What is lust? Isn't it very often the love of beauty? Mustn't an artist love beauty? Think of bandy legs! Could I love a man of genius who had bandy legs?" He saw in her big nut-brown eyes what he called "the buffoon look." Irresponsible laughter seemed brimming in them for an instant. "I might love the thing unseen—yes. But I must be able to love the thing seen too."

"But if the unseen thing has bandy legs and your mind sees them?"

"You're clever, Uncle Martin. But it isn't the same thing. Body is nearer to body than soul is near to soul, or even mind to mind."

"It would be easy to deny that and to give good reasons." He got up, remembered how short he was and sat down again.

"Why did you do that?" she said.

Dale reddened. "Never mind!" he said. "Even you must not know everything."

"He saw me once in Preston," she said. "When 'The Island of Dreams' was over I got a small part in a traveling company. We did a melodrama called 'The Man with the Blue Face.' And I was in it. Just imagine!"

Dale tried to, but nearly failed.

"He came down. He thought he was in love with me then. But when he saw my lodgings in Preston, and the part I had, and how I wasn't considered by anybody he felt it was ridiculous and unsuitable for him to be in love with me. And so he wasn't! Isn't it strange that a human being can be like that? A shark is strange. But a human being like that is stranger still, I think. But now I play the principal part at the Central Theater and I have this house, and wonderful people come to it, and Campion can't get in. And so *he* wants to love me again."

"Will you let him?"

"I don't want to, and I do—I do! Oh, Uncle Martin!"

He came close to her. She put her hands on his shoulders and began to sob, desperately.

He realized how terrible it was for a man, not old, and ardent, to be trusted so much by a woman.

Will young Trever's influence over Valentine grow stronger? And what will happen to Dale, who is already jealous, if that occurs? You will learn in Robert Hichens's February Instalment

Secrets of the White House

(*Continued from page 39*)

to save enough money to buy the second Mrs. Wilson a home on S Street, where she now resides, and to leave her a fairly comfortable income, as well as a modest annuity to Miss Margaret Wilson, his one unmarried daughter.

I don't think that the Wilsons had been in the White House more than a few months before Mrs. Wilson said to me one day: "Jessie was engaged to marry a missionary, but she broke her engagement and is now engaged to Mr. Sayre. She seems to be very much in love with him and she will have to make up her mind pretty soon one way or another."

That first summer Mr. Sayre made only one visit to the White House, but when the President's family moved to the Churchill house in New Hampshire, he was a house guest for two weeks.

Mr. Sayre was the son of an old American family, and while he was a man of modest means, he was a cultured and fine gentleman. Both the President and Mrs. Wilson grew fond of him, and of course Miss Jessie was deeply in love.

Shortly after we returned to the White House in September, Mrs. Wilson told me that the wedding would take place in November.

It was a beautiful wedding—the thirteenth

in the history of the White House and the first one following the marriage of Miss Alice Roosevelt to Mr. Nicholas Longworth, seven years before.

A short time after the wedding of Miss Jessie Wilson to Mr. Sayre it grew to be noticeable that Mr. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury, was becoming more than a casual visitor at the White House. I remember chiding Miss Eleanor, the President's youngest daughter, about this, but she denied any serious intent on her or Mr. McAdoo's part.

However, Mr. McAdoo was no backward suitor, and I find in my notes on March 4th, 1914, exactly a year after the Wilsons entered the White House: "I have an idea that Mr. McAdoo and Miss Eleanor will in the near future join hands for life. All things point that way right now."

My surmise was correct, for on March 14th, 1914, President Wilson and Mrs. Wilson announced Miss Eleanor's engagement to Mr. McAdoo, and seven weeks later, on May 7th, the wedding took place in the Blue Room.

At the wedding supper what might have been a terrible scene was averted only by the narrowest margin. Mr. McAdoo had three daughters by his first wife. One, Sallie, a little girl of twelve was a great favorite of the bride. The second, Miss Nona, was a young lady of nineteen, and the eldest was already married.

Just as the guests were sitting down to the wedding supper, the second daughter became hysterical, bursting into tears, and a scene that might have marred the whole affair was averted only by friends at her table quickly taking the young lady out of the room.

I have preserved the supper menu, served, of course, in the State dining-room.

Bouillon
Chicken patties
Boned capons and peas
Virginia hams served with salad
Celery salad
Strawberry ice-cream
Cake
Coffee
Champagne

The new Mrs. McAdoo's position in the McAdoo household, where there were already two girls, was by no means an easy one. It took her a year to win the second daughter's friendship and affection.

One Sunday morning early in the second March that the Wilsons were in the White House, Mrs. Wilson came out of her room to go to church. The heel of her shoe caught on the taping of the carpet of her bedroom and she was thrown on her face. She seemed to be badly shaken and said that she would lie down instead of going to church. When Doctor Grayson came he found that she had strained her back, but apparently it was nothing serious.

Shortly before this accident Mrs. Wilson had said to me: "I think I'll reduce ten or twelve pounds."

"That seems to me to be very foolish, Mrs. Wilson," I told her. "You have a lovely figure right now, and I think you would be silly to try to reduce."

"But I am going to take off at least ten pounds," she persisted—and diet she would.

Actually I think that this step had a great deal to do with her death. She was badly hurt by her fall, but by her self-inflicted diet she gave herself no chance to build up her strength.

Then, too, she apparently was in a rather unfortunate mental state at this time. Life in the White House seemed to her a little trying and hardly worth while. I don't believe that she really cared much about getting well. For months she simply gave up trying. President Wilson himself did everything he could to try to cheer her and get her to eat nourishing food.

Time and again I would go into her bedroom and find Mr. Wilson at her bedside.

"Please do eat just a little of this," he would beg. "You will soon get well, darling, if you'll



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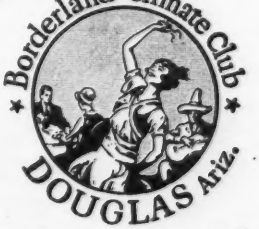
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try hard to eat something. Now please take this bite, dear."

But nothing seemed to be able to check the ebbing of Mrs. Wilson's strength. A slight operation failed to bring improvement. Without any apparent reason she seemed to sink lower and lower and for a week previous to her death it was only a question of hours until her remaining vitality would sink completely away.

Just a few minutes before five on the afternoon of August 6th, 1914, I went into her bedroom. The nurse was having tea at a table in the doorway where she could watch her patient.

I stepped to Mrs. Wilson's bed and looked down at her. Her head moved gently to one side and she looked up at me and whispered, "Oh, Mrs. Jaffray," and her eyes closed.

These were the last words she uttered, and five minutes later when the nurse approached the bed, she was gently breathing her last. She died just one year and five months after she had come to the White House.

The President was stunned and speechless. No other member of the family was as deeply affected.

He refused to have the body put in a casket and held in state, as had been the custom in White House deaths. Instead, he had Mrs. Wilson laid on a sofa in her bedroom up-stairs. With his own hands he placed around her shoulders a lovely white silk shawl. Her golden brown hair was braided and twisted around her head. She was a beautiful Madonna.

For two nights the President sat up alone in a chair by the sofa—a solitary and touching vigil.

Outside the bedroom door sat a secret service man, but the President was the only living person in the chamber of death.

On the third day the President permitted the body to be placed in a coffin and it lay in state in the East Room of the White House until the funeral party started for Georgia, where interment was made.

I have often thought how queerly fate twists things. The first Mrs. Wilson loved all flowers except orchids. Yet fate so arranged it that the single floral piece on the coffin was a great wreath of orchids.

As I recall it, it was in the following spring, some six or eight months later, when the President first met Mrs. Galt, who was later to be his wife.

I recall vividly the first time I ever saw Mrs. Galt. I had arrived in Washington two days before the inauguration of Mr. Taft, and my first Sunday in the White House I had started out to go to church. Chance had taken me to St. Thomas's, an Episcopal church, and the usher had shown me into a private pew.

I was barely seated when a very nice-looking lady was also shown into this pew. I instinctively knew that it was her private pew.

The following Sunday I again went to the same church, and shortly after I was seated the same lady was again shown to the pew. I was certain she did not resent my sharing her pew, but I made up my mind that on the following Sunday I would ask to be seated elsewhere. Circumstances, however, did not make this necessary because through a friend I was taken to another church and never returned to St. Thomas's.

One afternoon about six years later, when I was returning to the White House from a shopping tour, I noticed the President, Doctor Grayson, his personal physician, Miss Bones, who made her home at the White House during most of the time President Wilson was there, and a strange lady having tea at the east end of the second-floor corridor. Nodding to the party, I went directly to my rooms, took off my hat and coat, and shortly afterwards returned. Miss Bones called me to the table.

"Mrs. Galt, this is Mrs. Jaffray, who lives with us," she said. "Mrs. Galt is a friend of Doctor Grayson."

The President had already left the table, but from the conversation I knew this was the first time he had met his charming guest.

The next morning Doctor Grayson told me he had brought Mrs. Galt to see Miss Bones, who had been sick for several months at the White House. The President had had tea with them merely as a formality.

Two or three days later I noticed that Mrs. Galt came to tea again. And a few days after that she came to luncheon, and shortly was a dinner guest. Ostensibly she was always the guest of Miss Bones, and often they would walk and spend hours alone together.

However, it wasn't long before I began to see Mr. Wilson with her, and soon I realized that the President was deeply in love with this charming widow from Twentieth Street. That year the summer White House was Winston Churchill's beautiful home at Cornish, New Hampshire.

On June 23rd, 1915, I find in my diary the following words:

"Mrs. Galt and Miss Bones arrive. Things are looking very serious."

I remember that particular night very well. The President was away at the time, and the two ladies were arriving by motor-car from Washington. They were expected to arrive at dinner-time and I waited dinner for hours. Finally when it grew late I gave up all plans for their having dinner and simply ordered the cook to be prepared to make hot chocolate and coffee and sandwiches when they should arrive.

It was about midnight when their car finally drove up and they came into the house. Late as it was, we sat over the sandwiches and coffee and talked for more than an hour. That week the President spent a great deal of time walking and driving with Mrs. Galt.

It was a lovely old-fashioned courtship. After dinner the President and Mrs. Galt would walk under the trees in the moonlight hand in hand like boy and girl sweethearts.

The President's daughters were delighted with the match. Very soon the girls were calling Mrs. Galt by her first name, Edith, and she was taken into the bosom of the family.

I was soon convinced that the President and Mrs. Galt would be married, but there was no announcement of any kind until early in October, when one evening at the White House the President, in his study, called to me as I was in the corridor.

He rose from his desk when I came into the room.

"Mrs. Jaffray," he said, "I just want to tell you before I make it public that I expect to marry Mrs. Galt in about two months."

"I am very glad, Mr. President," I replied. "I congratulate you. She is a beautiful and charming lady. It will be very lovely to have her here in the White House."

"Thank you, Mrs. Jaffray," he said. "I know that you will not speak to anyone about this."

A day or two later he made the announcement public, and on December 18th he was married at Mrs. Galt's home.

After a few days' honeymoon at Hot Springs, Virginia, President Wilson and his bride returned to the White House.

I remember my first talk with the new First Lady of the Land.

"My dear Mrs. Jaffray," she began, "I want things to go right along as they always have. I want no change of any kind."

So it was that I began the third of my great experiences in the White House—only this one was to embrace the thrilling war days and culminate in the breakdown of a President whose memory will live forever.

Next Month Mrs. Jaffray *will tell of the war days, the breakdown of President Wilson and the true inside story of what happened during the mysterious 18 months that followed*